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Echoes of a Belle ;

OR,

A VOICE FROM THE PAST.

BY

Ben Shadow

“One touch of Nature makes the whole world kin,
That all, with one consent, praise new-born gauds,
Though they are made and moulded of things past ;
And give to dust, that is a little gilt,
More laud than gilt o'er-dusted.”

TROILUS AND CRESSIDA



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TO

The Memory

OF

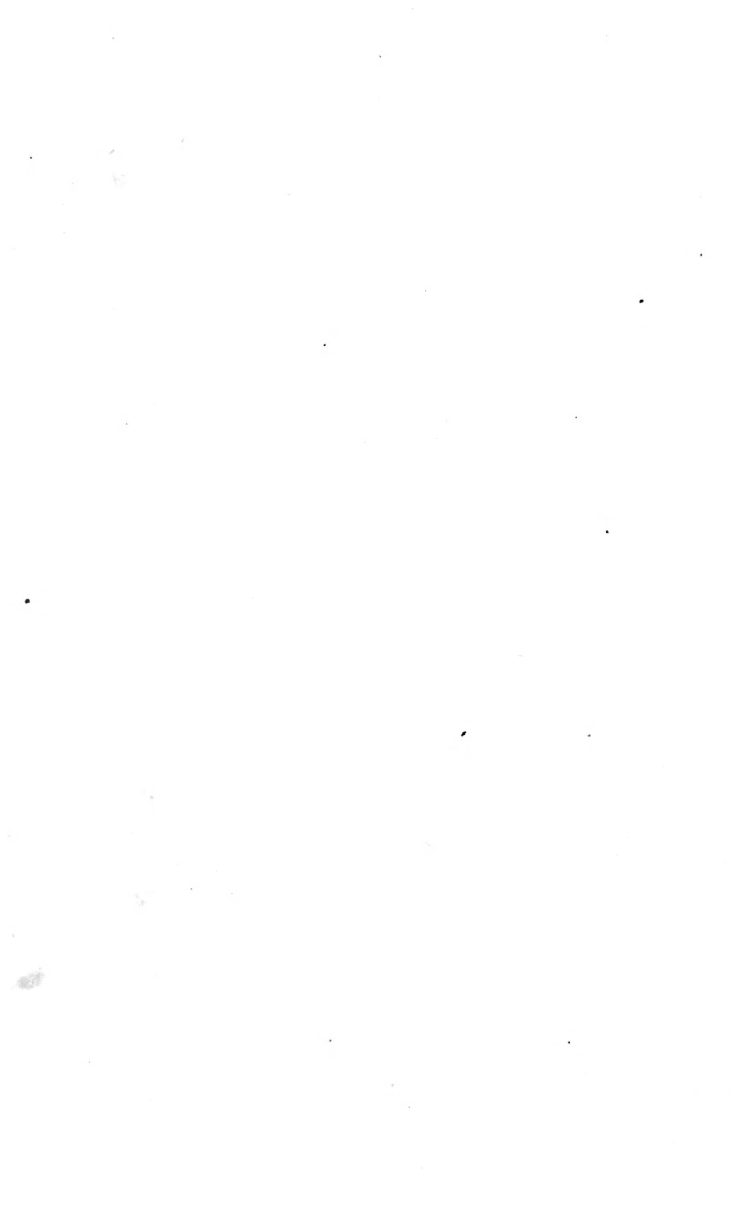
J. FENIMORE COOPER,

THE AMERICAN NOVELIST,

THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED

BY

THE AUTHOR.



P R E F A C E .

It is not merely with the hope that the name of Fenimore Cooper may reflect lustre upon these pages, that I have placed my humble offering upon his shrine, but as a tribute of friendship and esteem for one I knew and valued, not only in his writings, but in the more intimate relations of private life.

In the summer of 1849, I was a guest for several days at his residence at Cooperstown, upon the borders of Otsego Lake. It was here that I would ever recall him, in calm retirement, surrounded by his interesting family.

I can picture him now, seated in that quiet library, opening on a garden contrasting pleasantly in its smiling beauty, with those dark oaken cases piled with treasured lore ; upon a curiously carved table were various papers and letters, and at one end of the apartment stood a large screen from which shone forth in quaint medley, fair faces, bright landscapes, autographs of the great and wise, kings and citizens, the dead and the living, the evil and the good, mingled in fantastic union. My kind host seems to stand by my side, as he did then, linking

with some familiar name or scene an agreeable reminiscence or piquant anecdote, while the day wore unconsciously away, and when the sun cast its last gleam upon his silvery hair, we wandered beyond the enclosure, strolling along the margin of the little lake, which reflected in its clear surface the purple shadows of Mount Vision, towering above it like the giant warder of those crystal waters. And then as the stars peeped out one by one we returned slowly homeward.

Since then three years have passed, and in that happy home what changes have been wrought!

Little did I dream that I saw my friend for the last time, that in the rustic churchyard, where the graves of his forefathers were thickly clustered, he would so soon sleep in death.

The stone that marks his last resting-place may crumble into dust, but his gifted pen has left records more imperishable and monuments more lasting than sculptured marble or polished bronze.

And for the frail fabric, upon which I have ventured to inscribe his name, I would crave the public charity; handle it lightly, like glass—it will bear little rough usage; one harsh, rude touch, and it will fall, even as the card houses we built in childhood.

To your tender mercy, gentle reader, I consign, with all its faults and imperfections,

THE ECHOES OF A BELLE.

Introduction to Dawn.

I AM an old man, in my quiet home, and the echoes of the Past oome sighing through the desolate chambers of my heart. Those pleasant memories have cheered many a weary hour, and I would ring out their chimes again more clearly and more widely—not with the loud, harsh clapper of the old bell in the church steeple, but in gentler vibration I would swell the merry peal, at Dawn, when the day is still young, the world an unopened book, and the pages of destiny unstained with tears.



D A W N .

CHAPTER I.

A LOVELIER day never dawned upon the stately avenue of majestic oaks, boasting the growth of a century, and forming, in their interlacing branches, for more than a quarter of a mile, an archway to a most substantial stone mansion, the homestead of a southern planter.

It was a bright spring morning, the birds were twittering in their leafy coverts, and the long grey moss hung in shadowy drapery from the old oaks; the dew was still glittering upon the leaves, and the air was sweet with the early breath of flowers; when fairer than these voiceless children of spring, a gentle girl entered this dim aisle of Nature's Cathedral.

Sweet Alice Vere! I see you now, in your simple dress, a bonnet thrown back and hanging by its ribbons about your neck, a face in cloudless purity and truth, and in your beautiful eyes an eloquence of thought almost at variance

with the child-like brow, and the witchery of that rosy mouth. She was eagerly looking down that long vista to the great gate at the end of the avenue; another glance, and she had flown towards the house, as the sound of rapidly approaching wheels became audible.

Upon the steps of the portico stood Major and Mrs. Vere, a lady and gentleman of the old school, worthy scions, in their noble bearing, of their English ancestry.

As a light traveling carriage drove up, there were words of welcome and warm greetings from all, for even the old family servants hastened forward to shake hands with their young masters—two tall striplings, singularly engaging in their appearance. Arthur was grave and reserved beyond his years, but in his quiet face there was a gentle sweetness, touchingly blended with manliness and strength; whilst Jocelin, the younger brother, was a handsome off-hand youth, intelligent, and full of life and fun.

Lingering behind them was another lad, young Walter Gray, the orphan son of an early and lamented companion in arms of Major Vere, during the late revolutionary struggles of his country. The youth, in his aristocratic beauty, strongly recalled that lost friend, and the Major had ever regarded young Gray with a most parental interest.

Whilst Walter stood by the side of his kind host, his eyes unconsciously followed that fairy form, with her arm around her brother Arthur's neck, and her right hand clasped in Jocelin's. She was indeed a lovely picture, and well he

remembered when he had shared, in younger days, that sisterly embrace. But now, Alice looked upon him as a man, for he was her senior by several years, and she had grown into her fifteenth birthday since they had met.

The breakfast bell rang, and the old grey-headed butler stood at the parlor door, with his small silver tray in hand, to usher them into a room, where a bright wood fire was blazing upon the ample hearth, and a most substantial repast awaited our hungry travellers.

Although the mornings were still so chilly as to make a fire agreeable, there was a window thrown open, letting in the first sweet breath of spring; and the beautiful blossoms of the hundred-leaved rose clustered around the lattice, peeping into that pleasant room. Just outside the casement there was a small shelf, where Alice scattered rough rice for the red birds, who built their nests in the garden beneath, and so tame were her pretty visitants, that even the merry voices within did not startle them at their morning meal.

Mrs. Vere, in her morning dress with neatly plaited frills and high-crowned muslin cap, sat before an antique looking silver tea-service, dispensing fragrant mocha and souchong.

Well do I remember those breakfasts at The Oaks! those tempting hot waffles, baked in the shape of the most benign hearts; the smoking dish of snow-white hommony; the rice Johnny cakes, and the delicate wafers, that looked as if one might demolish them by a touch; and for substantials, the venison or broiled teal, the sausages, and thinly sliced hogs-

head cheese. To my boyish fancy those hearted waffles were something quite unique in gastronomy.

At breakfast time the post-boy always sent in the leathern letter bag, which Fortune, in his grey and silver livery, handed most deferentially to his master. If the Major had a weakness, it was his attachment to, or rather, nervous sensitiveness as regarded the contents of this old post-bag. No hand ever ventured to open it but his own, and there was something mysterious in his manner of distributing the different letters. His wife was too far above all petty curiosity to disturb him in the enjoyment of his favorite hobby, by asking any questions; so, after finishing his cup of coffee, he would slip off to his own quiet study and arm-chair, to read his letters and papers alone.

Alice was watching her pets upon the window-sill, and Walter stood by her side; they did not seem to find much to say, for she was still shy; he had been such a stranger of late years among them: she remembered how he had been wont to call her his little wife: and her pretty face blushed brighter than the roses, as he laid his hand upon her fingers and gathered them to his lips. "Oh! Walter, what will Mamma think?" but Mamma was at the old buffet, filling up the cordial-stands and sugar-pots, and did not heed the young people. And Alice's governess, the vigilant Miss Murrel, had gone on a visit to her relatives.

Jocelin's voice was now heard, calling "Walter," the lads were waiting for him to look at their dogs, but it was not

until the summons was seconded by Arthur's demure face, peeping in at the door, that Walter heeded the call; the red birds, or the hands in the glass basin filled with rough rice, were so pretty!

CHAPTER II.

THE boys were in the hall where, at one end, their guns were kept, upon a broad low stand ; there, too, hung the shot-bags, hunting horns, and deer-skin pouches. Upon a row of pegs along the wall there was a most heterogeneous collection of hats, of all shapes and sorts ; and over the entrance door was fastened a lordly pair of antlers, belonging to some forest king, and placed there before the lads were born, a trophy from the hunting days of their grandfather.

They were soon at the foot of the garden steps ; how well the dogs remembered their old playmates ; and what a din they kept up, with their deep-baying mouths !

Alice had joined her mother in her daily walk to the Settlement, which gleamed prettily through a dark clump of cedar trees. The cottages, some thirty in number, were neatly whitewashed, and placed in rows, or streets, as they call them. All the men and able-bodied women had gone to their tasks, and the sick, the children, and the old women who attended them, were the only ones at home. Under a wide spreading tree, were seated a circle of little darkies, each with their cedar piggin and iron spoon ; and a fatter,

more contented set of imps were never seen. In the middle of the yard, there was a fire burning under a large iron cauldron, where the soup for the mid-day meal was concocted by the head nurse.

Mrs. Vere never went amongst them without being warmly welcomed. It was pleasant to see the old lady in her green silk calèche, with a basket on her arm, filled with medicines and old linen, going from door to door, to prescribe for the sick, or to comfort the dying. Verily she fulfilled the old patriarchal law, in her excellent and kind relation to her slaves.

After the usual directions had been given, Alice and her mother walked through the grove, passing by the church where the people attended, decently clad and in respectful order, the instructions of their good pastor, every Sunday morning. The hands were hoeing in the open fields. At the sight of "old and young missus," every hat was lifted, and a happy murmur rose from every lip. There was no overwork or discontent here, no hungry, ill-fed stomachs, but a cheerful class of working people full of pride and attachment for their owners.

They reached the house just as the Major had dismounted from his horse, when the dressing-bell rang, and Alice ran off to her own room: her pretty room, with its fair dimity and simple furniture.

Seated by the window on a low stool was Lisette, her little tire woman; black as ebony, with brilliant teeth, a large

mouth, gold hoops pendent from her ears, and a bright bandana twisted into a turban upon her head. She did not move from her work as Alice opened the door; the young girl stepped cautiously on, stooped over Lisette—she was fast asleep, and as she woke with a start, her little mistress said very gravely, “Why! Lisette, I do believe that you have slept all the morning over your work; not a stitch done. Well! I won’t tell mamma this time, so come and help me dress. What shall I wear?”

Now quite awake, her busy handmaid answered, “Aye! Missy, you nebber care ’fore to-day what gown you take; but Mass Walter don’t stand half so pretty as Mass Jocelin, I know.” “Lisette, you are talking nonsense; there, quick! give me my dress. Dear me! everything goes wrong to-day. What is the matter with the pins, you stupid Lisette! Well, there’s the dinner bell, and I am ready at last.” With these words, Alice had flown, and at the foot of the stairs met her father, who imprinted a kiss upon the brow of his lovely child, and taking her hand in his, they entered the dining-room.

After a blessing had been asked, and the soup removed the table was covered with the most admirable viands, followed by an elegant dessert. Then the nuts and old Madeira were placed upon the shining mahogany; and Mrs. Vere with Alice withdrew, leaving the gentlemen to join them in the drawing-room.

Seated in her high-backed chair, very upright, with her knitting in hand, was the lady of the mansion. Click, click

went the needles—Mrs. Vere was strongly prejudiced against sleeping after dinner, she would not forget herself for an instant; but the delicate fingers faltered, the click, click was interrupted, and verily there was the slightest possible approach to a nod!

Weary of the quiet room, Alice had stolen off to the garden. And what a garden that was, with its beds of roses of every variety and kind, from the beautiful moss, and highly scented musk, down to the common daily; and there were banks of deep blue violets, shaded by rows of orange trees, whose bridal buds gleamed through the dark foliage, filling the air with luscious perfume, and farther on was the fragrant olive with its diminutive blossoms, mingling with the spicy brown flowers of the aromatic shrub.

Among the roses stood Alice, selecting the choicest and fairest for the drawing-room vase.

Soon a bouquet was gathered too large for her tiny hands to hold, and a tendril from the woodbine was twisted round to bind them closer, when a brilliant butterfly, with golden wings, settled on a damask rose, the flowers were left, and away she flew, a happy thoughtless child, after the glittering rover.

But eager footsteps followed hers, and smoothing her disordered tresses, the woman fluttered in her heart again, as Walter approached.

Arthur had gone to see his old nurse, who lived in the house by the brook, which had been expressly built for

mammy and her old man; they were upon the retired list, pensioners for life, with their own garden, poultry-yard, and cow.

Jocelin was on his way to the stables to look after the steeds for to-morrow's hunt; he had little confidence in the antiquated veterinarian; his orders were given to a younger groom, but privately, not to wound the pride of Uncle Ned.

Walter now proposed a walk in the labyrinth at the foot of the terrace, and Alice and he were soon merrily threading its mazes. "Alice," he said, playfully, "I wish my life was like this labyrinth, with you always by my side. I should never seek to escape from its pleasant intricacies." A blush and a light laugh, as she answered, "Oh! yes, you would, Walter, for we should become so tired of each other in this eternal round! But there are the boys, let us join them." A slight frown contracted the brow of her companion, as he reluctantly followed.

When they entered the house, lights in the tall silver candlesticks were placed upon the table; and tea was handed by old Fortune. After which, Mrs. Vere seated herself for a quiet game of piquet with Arthur, whilst the Major and Jocelin played backgammon.

Alice sat busily netting a little green silk purse, and Walter looked up every now and then from his book, to tease or question her as to the person for whom this mysterious piece of her own handiwork was destined.

The purse was not quite finished when the hall clock struck nine, and with a kind good night, the little party dispersed.

CHAPTER III.

AROUND the breakfast table, the next morning, were only the Major, his lady and daughter. After Mrs. Vere had accomplished her usual routine of duty, the old family coach, with its yellow body perched upon tall spider-looking wheels, drove up to the front door, and Uncle Ned, in all the pride of a livery whose silver lace was rather tarnished, by its careful preservation for state occasions, was in his glory: seated upon the high, narrow box, whip in hand, stiff and erect as pasteboard. The footman had let down a perfect ladder of steps, when Mrs. Vere, in a black silk bonnet pitched on the top of her high cap, and in an ample silk gown, climbed into the coach, followed by her inseparable basket, and her pretty Alice, to pay a visit to a neighboring family.

The knitting was unrolled, and the old horses jogged along at a snail's pace, whilst Uncle Ned slept upon his outpost, for the team knew their way to Colonel Summers's quite as well as he did.

After an hour's drive, the carriage stopped before a long white house, with a wide piazza, whose rough exterior was covered by a clustering vine of the yellow jessamine.

Mrs. Summers had just presented her lord, with a tenth addition to his family, and Mrs. Vere's basket of jellies and blanchmange was conveyed to her delicate friend.

Colonel Summers received them, looking very little elated by his good fortune in such a healthful and numerous progeny. He was a planter in a small way, and found it hard to make the two ends meet. Lucy, his eldest daughter, was a pretty girl of fourteen, with blonde curls and hazel eyes; but, left to herself to run wild, she needed pruning sadly, a choice but neglected vine. Some of her happiest days had been passed at "The Oaks," and Mrs. Vere had now come to ask the Colonel to allow Lucy to spend some time with them, that she might share Miss Murrel's superintendence and instruction with her own little girl.

The parlor, where they sat, seemed, to Alice, to swarm with children, like flies in June; there were babies of all sizes, down to the last new type, smothered in flannel, in the arms of a fat nurse.

When the wine and silver basket of cake were handed to the visitors, a little red-headed urchin, with great round eyes, climbed up behind the Colonel's chair, and pulling him by his coat collar, pointed to the cakes with their smoothly iced tops, and cried out, "Oh! pa, I want one dem cakes wid de kiver on 'um."

Alice stuffed a bit of cake into her own mouth to hide a laugh, and the boy obtained the summit of his ambition.

They were again on their way home; the venerable steeds

quickenèd their pace, and Uncle Ned dozed upon the box when a sudden jolt brought the black silk bonnet into rude contact with the top of the coach, and Alice was bounced off the seat.

Mrs. Vere let down the glass between her groom and self, calling out, "Why! Ned, you must have been asleep to drive over such a stump!"

Straightening himself in his seat, the old man replied, "Missus! I nebber shut my eye once, it was only an accident, marm." However, there were no more jolts, and they reached home with only a suspicious dent or two in the stately bonnet.

The boys had been gone since sunrise, and dinner was postponed an hour later on their account; when the sound of a horn was followed by the noise of horses' feet coming at full speed through the avenue, and Alice stood with her father upon the steps to receive the young sportsmen, who were soon busily recounting their adventures. They had had rare sport, and Jocelin had shot a magnificent buck.

After the lads had changed their gear and dined, the whole party went out upon the lawn to see the spoils of the hunt. There the noble animal lay with his proud antlers in the dust, the blood still welling from his throat, and his large bright eye glazed in death.

Alice could not look upon him long; she turned away with tears in her kind eyes, and after Major Vere had given orders for the disposal of the deer, they returned to coffee in the drawing-room. That night the little purse went on famously, and

was finished before bed time. As Alice folded it up, she wondered "whether Walter dreamt it was for him?"

The last day of Walter's stay at The Oaks had arrived; he was going away for years, to travel in Europe. The morning meal was more silently dispatched than usual, for the youth was a favorite amongst them all.

Alice had caught up her bonnet for a walk with her brothers, but they were gone for their guns, and Walter and herself reached the woods without them.

How beautiful are our southern forests in spring, with those golden wreaths of fragrant jessamine hanging in light festoons from branch to branch, and mingling with that long grey moss, as it waves its shade-like pall upon the air; death and life twining together. Towering in majesty the magnolia "*grandiflora*" spreads its broad glossy leaves in thick panoply of shade, and there is the dogwood dressed in virgin white, the fringe tree, and the wild crab with its delicate pink blossoms.

What cool, shaded walks, what purling brooks were in that beautiful, silent wood at The Oaks. Upon the stump of an old tree sat a child-like form, and at its feet lay Walter Gray, twining a jessamine wreath into a golden crown for Alice, and when it was upon her brow, never did queen receive more earnest homage.

As Walter knelt before her, she said, laughingly, "When I was a child, Walter, I thought it must be a fine thing to

sit upon a great gold throne, with a shining crown, and to have every one obey my lightest word, but now I would not change this bright chaplet for a kingdom, nor be anything but simple Alice Vere."

"Yes, Alice Vere!" sighed her young knight, "but she will change like everything else, and when I return from my long pilgrimage, shall I find her still my little Alice Vere?"

Her heart was full, but she answered lightly, "Oh! yes, I know I shall grow old and ugly one of these days, but that is a long way off, and I am only thinking, now, how very sad it is for you to go away, dear Walter!"

The little hand was tenderly pressed in his, as he asked her to wear the ring he slipped upon her finger, whilst he received the mysterious silk purse as her parting gift.

And now it was time to return, for the hours had flown in those pleasant woods, and silently they wandered back towards home.

He had gone, and Alice had shed many tears in her own room, but ashamed of her tell-tale eyes, she had bathed them again and again, and then hastened to place a note, she had written, on her mother's toilette-table.

The evening was spent quietly in the drawing-room with their books and work, and Alice's subdued face was bent over her sewing. Jocelin did not notice the ring upon her finger, for his own careless mirth was clouded by the departure of his friend.

At an early hour the family had retired ; Mrs. Vere found the little note, fastened to her pin-cushion, and read these words :—

“DEAR MAMMA :

“Walter is gone, and I am very sad ; he gave me at parting a pretty ring which I should like to wear ; but pray, dear mamma, don’t let Jocelin or papa tease me about it ; I tell you now, because I was afraid you would ask me, before them all, who gave it me.

“Your own

“ALICE.”

In her long loose wrapper and night-kerchief, with the light shaded by her hand, the mother passed into Alice’s apartment, to set that little heart at ease. But her child had forgotten the day and its troubles in quiet sleep, her head was pillowed on the snowy lawn, and the long dark lashes rested upon her cheek.

To that mother’s heart how beautiful she was ; pure and sinless as an angel from above ; yet, on that cheek and silken lash the tears of earth were glittering.

Stooping softly over her, the lady pressed a gentle kiss upon the forehead of the sleeping girl, whilst eyes, that seldom knew such softness, were moistened then, for she felt this this was her child’s first sorrow in the glimmering dawn of womanhood.

CHAPTER IV.

MISS MURREL had returned with fresh vigor to the field; strict and conscientious in the discharge of her duties, she exacted much from others. Small, spare, and upright, with a quick eye that nothing escaped, she stood upon the verge of spinsterhood.

But there was much real excellence in her character, and those crisp, short curls and high top comb, crowned a head well stored with learning and sound judgment.

One bright morning in May, an old dilapidated chaise and raw-boned grey drove up the avenue, and Lucy Summers was consigned by her father to Mrs. Vere's motherly care; her small hair trunk was safely deposited, bearing the initials C. S., in brass nails, upon the top, and containing her whole stock of worldly goods. But, though poor, Lucy was a proud, ambitious child, and there was the seal of gentle blood in the natural elegance of her form and face.

Quick and versatile in her powers, the neglected girl soon did credit to Miss Murrel's instruction. It was not long before she excelled in Algebra; whilst Alice most cordially

detested those tedious equations, her little head was not formed for computation, and her multiplication-table had been a sad stumbling-block. Many a "jour maigre" of penance and tears had blotted, in younger days, that chequer-board of numerals at the back of her arithmetic. It was all in vain, as fast as those long lines were packed in right, they would pop out again the wrong way. But, in her other studies she was well advanced, and in her facility for acquiring languages she bore the palm from Lucy.

The lessons were over for the day, and the girls had wandered to a distant spring, where the ruins of a miniature cottage still stood; it had been built for Alice by Walter and her brothers, and had been the scene of many a sunny play.

She was on her knees, peeping in through the door, as she asked:—

"Do you remember, Lucy, that round flat stump in the middle was the table where we used to set our acorn cups and saucers, and there, by the spring, was our dairy? How happy we were, then. Ah! sometimes I am sorry I can never be that little child again!"

Lucy was dreaming, and murmured, as if speaking to herself:—

"Whilst I long to be a woman, I shall never marry a poor man; for wealth is power, and that would be another name, to me, for happiness."

Alice looked up with a puzzled face, and exclaimed:—

"What strange fancies! Your bright eyes, Lucy, seem to look far into the mysterious future, whilst I am content in the quiet present."

"Yes," returned her fair friend, "you are entangled in the meshes of your first romance, and write furtive verses ending in 'sigh' and 'die,' and you have sometimes tried how prettily Alice Gray would look written in a fair running hand. Dear me! in a few years you will forget your gentle swain, for he will go to the East, and fall in love with Egyptian mummies, and other rusty antiquities!"

Upon the brow of her gentle listener there was an expression of such real pain, that Lucy's arm encircled her, with a pleading look for forgiveness, as they turned their steps slowly homeward.

At breakfast, when the post-bag was opened, there were letters from Walter, to the Major and Jocelin, saying he was to sail in a few hours for Liverpool, and bidding them all farewell in words that plainly showed how gratefully his heart still lingered at "The Oaks." Whilst the Major, contrary to his usual custom, read his letter aloud, Alice hid her tearful eyes behind the sheltering rim of her tea-cup, and, as soon as she could, escaped to her own room.

It was about a week after this that the leathern bag disgorged, amongst a pile of papers and magazines, a long official-looking document, inclosing a warrant for Jocelin. The lad had always set his heart upon entering the navy,

and after his father had tried every reasonable way of combating his son's choice, he had yielded a reluctant consent. An application was made to the Naval Department at Washington, and Jocelin had now obtained his utmost desire.

Whiter than her dress was the cheek of his mother, and those small thin lips were more tightly compressed, as she heard her boy's fate sealed for a life of danger and exposure, in far distant wanderings from home.

Lucy sat calmly at the table, but a brilliant spot glowed beneath the tearless lids of her downcast eyes ; the burning heart had sent its fires there, and the beautiful mouth slightly quivered in its mute repose.

Jocelin did not dream that so calm a surface could hide a heart worth proving. He was comforting his sister, and had drawn her towards him, playfully chiding her timid fears, as he exclaimed :—

“ Why, Alice, I shall soon have a ship of my own, and then you may sail with me over bright seas to fair lands, where Walter has gone ! So save your tears, my pretty one, and only wish me joy ! ”

Pleasantly the summer had flown at their sea-shore residence, and winter found the family group again assembled at “ The Oaks.” But there was one gap in their circle ; with the falling leaves of autumn, Jocelin had gone to join his ship for a two years' cruise. And many a stormy night,

when the wind whistled through the old trees, did fond and prayerful hearts supplicate for the safety of that loved one on the wide, wide sea.

CHAPTER V.

It was Christmas-day, and the long piazza, at the back of the house, was covered with bales of blankets and boxes of pipes and tobacco for the people. There Major and Mrs. Vere distributed the usual presents, a comfortable blanket to some, to others hats or woollen caps, gay handkerchiefs, needles, thimbles and scissors to the women. There were pipes and tobacco, for all who wanted them, the hogshead of molasses was opened, and a beef had been killed for the holidays. Old Jim received a new fiddle, from his master's hand, with a broad grin of delight, and, after a "merry Christmas" had been wished to all, they returned to the Settlement laden with their gifts.

And now the sound of careless mirth was heard in every house, daddy Jim had screwed up his fiddle, and braced against the whitewashed wall, he "discoursed," if not "sweet music," a most inspiring jig. The young, in their Sunday's best, danced until sunset, and the old smoked and feasted to their hearts' content.

Not less merry was the party in the hall; many visitors were assembled from far and near. Colonel Summers, lady

and progeny, the Digbies and their son and heir, the Listons, with two pretty daughters, still in their teens, Mr. and Mrs. Prince and twins, with two colored nurses in attendance, and Mr. Adolphus PIPPS, a precise bachelor.

The table groaned beneath the glorious cheer, as they sat down, just twenty in number, to dinner.

The Cassena with its coral berries, the dark green holly, and the mistletoe, hung in fresh garlands in the hall, which was lighted for the dance. In the drawing-room the card-tables were set out, and seated at them were parties playing loo and whist, whilst daddy Jim was summoned with his fiddle, followed by a tambourine, to the Terpsichorean hall.

Alice and Lucy, arrayed alike, in white muslin, blue sashes, and blue silk slippers, were most tempting partners.

Mr. Adolphus PIPPS shone resplendent in a dress-coat and gilt buttons, pumps and silk stockings. With a triumphant glance at the drawing-room mirror, he sallied forth, at the first scrape of the violin. When old Jim sung out lustily—

“Gentlemen, tak your pardners for a cotillon !”

The Misses Liston in gauze and flaxen curls looked divinely; Arthur and young Summers were the claimants for their hands, whilst Mr. PIPPS led Alice to her place at the head of the dance, and Lucy, as her *vis-à-vis*, was the partner of the elated Digby.

As Jim called out, "fore and back two!" Mr. Adolphus Pippis stepped out on tiptoe, and cut a pigeon-wing to perfection.

"Turn your pardners round," was obeyed by all but Joe Summers, who was lost in reveries of punch and eggnog in perspective.

In the "lady's chain," young Digby became entangled in Miss Liston's gauze.

The "Allemande at de corners," was immortalized by Mr. Pippis, and the whole wound up with a "Saushay all!"

A reel was then called for; the Major led off Mrs. Prince in a pink turban and green silk, and Mrs. Summers followed, leaning on the arm of Mr. Liston.

The son and heir of the house of Digby was most tender in his delicate attentions to Alice, squeezing her hand at every possible juncture, whilst Mr. Adolphus Pippis performed feats of grace with the elder Miss Liston.

Joe Summers, still the constant partner of the younger Miss Liston, stooped beneath the row of arms, stacked above him, and in a most flushed and excited state tore down the line, when, just at the close, a false step precipitated him almost into the lap of the portly Mrs. Digby.

The exhausted dancers were now brought up with hot eggnog, which, in an India bowl of inordinate capacities, was steaming fragrantly on the table, potent with the best old brandy.

Even the good Major seemed to have taken an undue share, and was fiercely fighting over his old battles of the

Revolution with Colonel Summers ; whilst Digby, junior, was making sheep's eyes, and talking rather thick as he whispered soft things to Alice.

The bowl appeared a never failing spring, still bubbling up, in spite of the frequent draughts at its bright fountain, when a fortunate move was made, by the lady of the mansion, for bed.

In every direction, to the eyes of the exhilarated gentlemen, beds and candlesticks were looming-out invitingly, and Joe Summers, in a perfect state of somnolency, groped his way to a door ; it yielded to his touch, he steadied himself and entered, when a shrill scream aroused him from his torpor, as Miss Murrel, "en papillote," and in a loose flannel gown, took refuge behind her bed-curtains, leaving Joe Summers dumb-founded in the middle of the floor. Another shriek, and Mr. Adolphus PIPPS, who occupied the adjoining apartment, rushed to the rescue ; placing his hand over Joe's unresisting mouth, he was dragged from the lady's room and safely consigned, by the chivalric PIPPS, to the custody of his own bed, under lock and key, as a surety for no more such youthful escapades. Miss Murrel was at last wrapped in "balmy sleep ;" not even the violent indisposition of the twins, just over her, and the anxiety of Mr. and Mrs. Prince, was made apparent to her steeped senses, for she was dreaming of her preux chevalier the immortal Adolphus PIPPS.

The next morning there were many missing ; symptoms

of headache among the gentlemen and loss of appetite with the ladies. The twins had survived the night and its terrors, and Mr. and Mrs. Prince were still in a most harmonious state of mind, from the pleasant little duet kept up until day, for their especial amusement. Nothing had been heard from the prisoner under solitary confinement; but Mr. Adolphus PIPPS looked as fresh as a rose, the secret repository of Miss Murrel's fair fame!

At dinner they were collected with renewed force, and Joe Summers revived his wasted powers on wild turkey and venison.

After tea the younger part of the company played at "blind-man's-buff" and "puss-in-the-corner," in which Digby and Summers came into violent collision and retired amicably to the dining-room, to quench any lingering spark of enmity in convivial intercourse.

———— A bright morning and an early seat in the saddle, for a long day's hunt; in which all the gentlemen joined, with the exception of young Digby, whose "heart was not in the chase."

With ample time for reflection the youth was still in a state bordering on frenzy. Encountering Alice in the shrubbery, he blushed redder than a full-blown peony, as, with a spasmodic jerk at his shirt-collar, he stammered out, with a lisp, "Mith Vere, will you allow me a few momenth converthathun vith you?"

Alice turned towards him, in surprise at his evident con-

fusion, when he seized her hand, and in a moment of intense excitement, laid at her feet his fortune and his heart.

The young girl was sobered in a moment; as she sought to withdraw her imprisoned hand, she replied, "Why, surely you are not in earnest, Mr. Digby, you cannot mean what you say; I am still a child, and would rather not hear of such serious things!" Here she was interrupted by her enraptured admirer, saying, "Oh! I can wait, Mith Vere, juth ath long ath you like, you cannot mean to refuthe my offer, for ma hayth I will be ath rich ath Crethuth!"

Alice hid her laughing face behind her handkerchief, and, when she had regained composure, distinctly told the crest-fallen Digby that she was sorry to decline the offer of his hand, but that she hoped he would forgive any temporary pain she might have inflicted, and that she fully honored his affection, if not the fortune which should place him upon a golden pinnacle with "Crethuth!"

Unfortunately for the heir of Digby, his tender confession was overheard by Lucy. She had come in search of Alice, and, having reached a sheltering hedge, was irresistibly enchained by the pleading voice of the smitten youth.

As she appeared, the conscious Digby plunged into a thicket, for solitary reflection, while the lady of his rejected heart strove to silence Lucy's gay bantering, as she exclaimed, "For shame! to laugh!—and since you have played the part of listener, you must now act a better one and promise never to mention this foolish affair, even to mamma!"

The Digbies were among the first to make their adieus, and early in the New Year of 1809, the rest of the guests returned to their own homes.

The holidays were over, and everything was again in its usual order at The Oaks.

The girls resumed their studies, whilst Miss Murrel drove the irresistible Mr. Adolphus PIPPS from her memory. Mrs. Vere became engrossed in her various domestic duties, and the Major read his letters and papers in peace once more.

In turning over the pages of a distinguished American writer of the present day, I find, in the history of our early colonies, a beautiful allusion to this sequestered southern life; he speaks "of affections expanded in the wilderness, where artificial amusements were unknown," and tells us that "the planter's whole heart was in his family, his pride in the children that bloomed around him, making the solitudes laugh with innocence and gayety."

There are none too good or too wise to profit by occasional seclusion, but, to a life of continued isolation and retirement there are objections; the mind naturally becomes contracted to the narrow limit that compasses our own daily avocations, the affections are centred only in the few who are bound to us by the sacred associations of home, we forget the great, strong world beyond with its heaving thoughts, its rapid action, we have no patience for its innovations, we cannot understand its sudden impulses, and wake from our torpor,

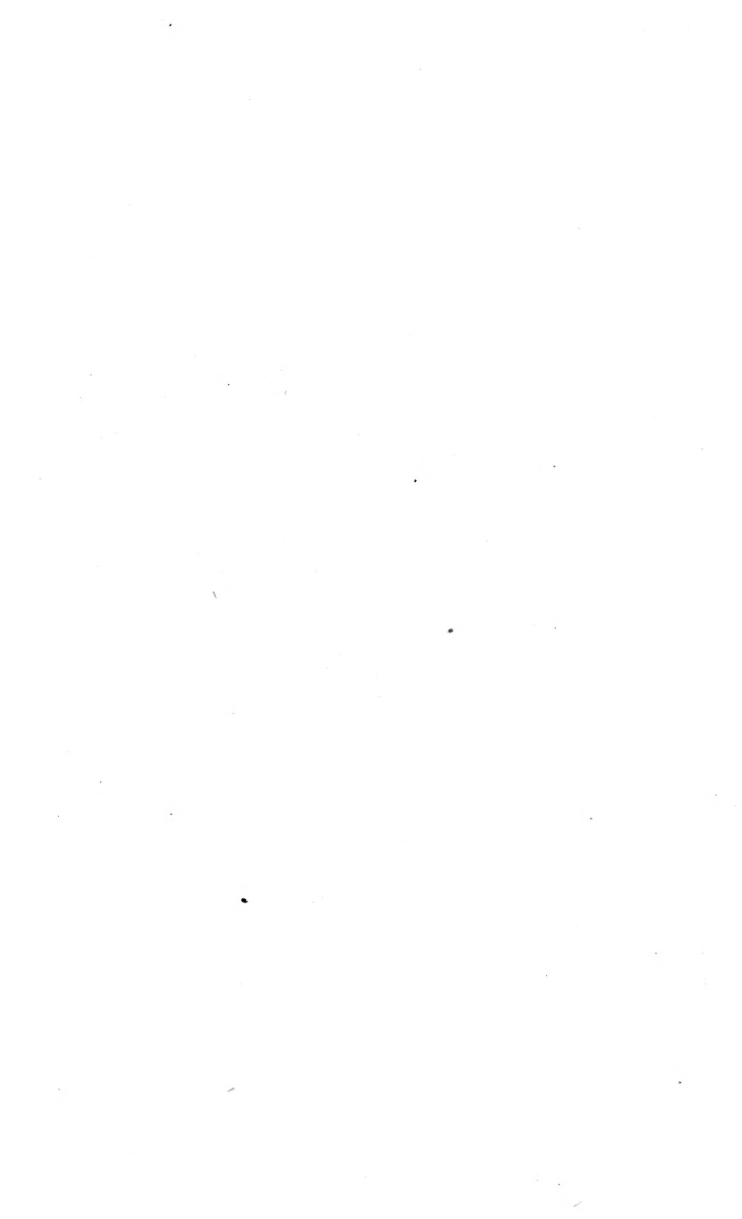
only to find ourselves far behind the age, with prejudices too strong for contention and too obsolete for the times.

In mingling with human nature, we will see much of evil, much that cries to us for charity, much that pleads for commiseration, but the Christian should not shrink as if there were pollution in the contact. Our Divine Master did not seem to place his religion in the cold austerities of monkish seclusion, when he breathed out his love for man in that tender aspiration, "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil."

Introduction to Noon.

THE merry chime of youth dies upon the air; its lingering echo carries me back to early years; I seem again to drink from the inspiring bowl in the old hall, and to dance to the sound of Jim's fiddle. Oh! ye dancing feet, how have ye wandered, in sorrow and in joy, over this fair Earth, to totter at life's close, alone, to the quiet grave!

Know ye, gentle Reader, that to even one so desolate, there are by-gone hours whose sunshine still glances on the old man's home, the lovely and the loved are often with me in golden dreams, and once more I sweep those heart-chords with my trembling hand, to prolong in lengthened tones another Echo of the Past.



N O O N .

CHAPTER I.

IN the reading-room of a favorite hotel, stood a group of fashionably dressed men, busily discussing the news of the day. Frank Howard, a dashing young blood, was speaking to a handsome Englishman, with a title in perspective. "Well, Langdon, are you for the ball to-night?" A most equivocal shrug was the only answer, as the cigar remained unmoved.

"Come, old fellow! this confounded indifference of you cool English won't do; to-night we will show you a face that will stir even your languid pulses, and in all your own bright isle, I'll wager you cannot match one so peerless as Alice Vere; she makes her *début* at the Governor's ball."

The Englishman was aroused enough to suggest, that "the lady was one of ten, and that the family fortune generally went by long division in America." Here a young naval

officer, on leave of absence, quickly retorted, "Hark ye, friend, in this broad land of ours, there is room and bread for all; we elder brothers do not feed on beef and plum-pudding, and leave our own flesh and blood to starve."

The color mantled in Reginald Langdon's cheek, but quickly passed, as Wallace added, with a pleasant smile, "if all Englishmen had your kind heart, Langdon, the law of primogeniture would be less abused."

And the little group strolled off, arm in arm, to look at a pair of bright bays, which Howard's groom was admiringly exhibiting before the door.

* * * * *

Lights were twinkling in the long deserted town mansion, and Alice was dressed for her first ball. How lovely she looked in that delicate robe of India muslin sprigged with silver; the slender throat and the rounded arm needed no sparkling gems to adorn their fair proportions. A coronet of silver oak leaves, in her dark hair, glistened like frost-work on her brow. Although the little head was proudly placed upon the chiselled bust, the heart was still the same untarnished jewel, and Walter's ring still glittered upon her finger.

Lisette was holding the candles before her young mistress, and declared "that missy in her goulin crown, would take the shine off ebry lady in the room!" When the dressing-room door opened, and a tall, graceful girl, with golden curls, glided into the apartment, "Why, Lucy!" exclaimed Alice,

"how charming you are, with that dark ivy wreath in your beautiful hair."

Those bright eyes were gazing at Alice, but not in envious pride, as she quickly returned, "And you, Alice, are as ethereal as a moonbeam, your dress is perfect!"

The rustle of a stately train swept by them, and Mrs. Vere, in a spotless turban and black satin, was a glorious picture of the lofty dames of by-gone days.

It had struck nine; the carriage now awaited them, and Alice flew to the drawing-room, to exhibit her dress to her father and Arthur. The Major stooped to kiss her fair cheek, saying, "My little Alice glitters like a star to-night!" and the dark eyes of Arthur were beaming fondly on his lovely sister, as he carefully folded her in her silken cloak and hood.

The band struck up a lively measure, as Alice made her courtesy to the Governor's lady in the ante-room.

She was leaning upon her brother's arm, looking at the dancers, and to her young eyes what a dazzling scene of light and enchantment it seemed. She did not heed the many admiring glances directed towards the ball-room door. Frank Howard approached with Wallace, in full uniform; the Lieutenant was introduced, and at once secured her hand for the next set, whilst Howard renewed an early acquaintance with Lucy Summers.

Wallace was a brilliant, amusing talker, and Alice was soon laughing merrily at his clever speeches. He gave her his arm to lead her to the dance; there was a murmur of pleasure and surprise as she took her place; even the

phlegmatic Englishman seemed entranced as she floated past, and whispered to a gentleman at his elbow, "By Jove! she is an angel. Howard did not overrate her points; and who is that handsome girl dancing opposite?" "Ah! her friend Lucy Summers. How confoundedly stupid, in me, not to dance, and there is that uniform of Ned Wallace's playing the very mischief!"

By the time the cotillon was over, Langdon was quite enough interested to ask an introduction, at the Governor's hands, to both mother and daughter. Howard was still at Lucy's side, and gave Wallace a knowing wink, as the Englishman, with unwonted "empressement," made his bow to Alice Vere. A most incessant fire was kept up by the naval hero on her right, and the Englishman on her left, until another dance, when Howard claimed the lady's hand, whilst the forsaken Langdon was left to admire his pumps and silk stockings in solitary glory.

Wallace was Alice's *vis-à-vis*, and forgot the figures, until Lucy called him to order.

Among the beaux, there was the rejected Digby, who blushed painfully as he saluted Alice, but was apparently in a most salubrious state, lipping out his soul to the younger Miss Liston.

It was the Englishman's turn, at last; he had the honor of handing Miss Vere to supper. Alice was the envy of many a manœuvring mamma, and the cause of many a secret sigh, in younger hearts, as she passed with Reginald Langdon down the grand staircase to the banqueting hall.

The ball was over, and our heroine, in all her wrappings, once more in the old coach ; her head still swam with the lights and music, when the carriage stopped at the door of their own mansion.

The beautiful dresses were laid aside, and the two girls, seated in their loose wrappers, by the fire in the dressing-room, were talking over the ball. "Was it not charming?" exclaimed Lucy, as she passed her hand through her fair curls, "and did you not think Frank Howard handsome? Crethuth, too, was magnificent in his buff vest!"

"Oh! yes," Alice replied, as she balanced a delicate slipper on the point of her pretty foot, "it was a delightful ball, and Howard has improved wonderfully since his trip abroad; but is not the Englishman charming, and the young Lieutenant in that captivating uniform! Oh! those buttons, how very taking they are;—but, dear me! how late it is; Mamma will scold; so, good night, *amica mia!*" Lucy gave her parting kiss, and went to her own room. But Alice remained dreaming by the fire, her thoughts seemed too bright to be lulled to sleep;—she was thinking of her pleasant partners, and was dancing over her first cotillon, when her eye accidentally fell upon the little ring glittering on her finger, the hand was quickly raised to her blushing lips as she softly murmured, "Dear, dear Walter!"

In her sleep she wandered once more through those quiet woods, and her jessamine crown, in its thornless beauty, shed a halo of peace upon her brow.

CHAPTER II.

A LIGHT, open carriage stood before the door, and Alice and Lucy, in their pretty bonnets, were equipped for an airing, after last night's dissipation. But they were as fresh as early violets, and were talking away very merrily, as they passed Howard in his gay curricule, his English friend by his side, followed by an outrider in livery.

The hats were quickly lifted, and as the ladies bowed, Langdon took his cigar from his mouth, and exclaimed, "By Jupiter! Howard, what a pair of loves stowed away in that bird's nest of a carriage; that dark-eyed beauty of yours is well enough, but Alice Vere is a gem worth wearing!"

The little carriage wheeled rapidly on, and stopped before a fashionable shop. The ladies had hardly entered the door, before "the bright buttons" were glancing at their side; Alice's purchases were soon made, and as the Lieutenant handed her to the vehicle, the touch of that little gloved hand sent a thrill of delight to the young man's heart. He eagerly asked whether she was not going to see Cooper in "Othello" that night? A sweetly murmured "yes," and

away the equipage rolled, leaving Wallace to finish his morning stroll.

———— The theatre was crowded from pit to gallery ; Mrs. Vere and party were seated in box No. 3.

Alice was very charming, in her simple dress, with her dark hair in one rich braid, encircling her classical head, and Lucy's eyes were beaming with light, as Howard whispered some gentle flattery in her ear.

The curtain rose, and Holman entered as Iago. The deepest silence attested the deference of the audience ; but when Cooper appeared, in the next scene, he was received with loud applause. What a magnificent Moor he made, with that superb voice and unequalled form ! Every ear was bent to catch his lightest word, and when he closed, there came another thundering burst from the assembled company.

The interest increased as Desdemona advanced, when Othello says—

“ She lov'd me for the dangers I had pass'd.
And I lov'd her that she did pity them,
This only is the witchcraft I have us'd.
Here comes the lady, let her witness it.”

In her fine expressive face and commanding form, Miss Holman was not the soft, yielding Desdemona we generally see portrayed ;—in a clear, full voice, with the most perfect enunciation, she answered—

"My noble father,

I do perceive here a divided duty ;

To you, I am bound for life and education ;

My life and education both do learn me

How to respect you ; you are the lord of duty.

I am hitherto your daughter ; but here's my husband,

And so much duty as my mother show'd

To you, preferring you before her father,

So much I challenge that I may profess

Due to the Moor, my lord."

As the play progressed, Alice's feelings were excited to the strongest indignation against the treacherous, wily Iago, when he had stolen the handkerchief and poisoned Othello's mind with jealousy.

Still hiding her eyes behind her fan, was our gentle novice, in box No. 3, as she whispered to the Lieutenant, "All this came of her dropping that troublesome little handkerchief!"

"Oh! no," he quickly replied, "the moral of the play is, that no woman should marry a foreigner," glancing at the Englishman, who seemed half pained and half amused at Alice's emotion; but could not help laughing at Wallace's new reading of Shakspeare.

They did not wait for the farce, and, as the carriage door closed upon a whispered "good night," Alice vowed that it should be the last tragedy she would go to, it was so provoking to make a baby of one's self, and to cry for nothing, she was sure she should dream all night of that horrible Othello! So much for marrying a man of that complexion.

* * * *

Mounted upon a full-blooded filly, in her dark habit and plumed hat, was Alice Vere, holding her little whip, and gathering up the silken reins for a morning's ride. At her side was the Lieutenant, and Lucy followed on a spirited nag, with Howard as her cavalier, whilst the old family groom brought up the rear.

They passed quietly through the town, but, when they had cleared its outskirts, the steeds were put at their fastest paces. How charming the air was, how exhilarating the exercise! And Wallace exulted over his friend, the Englishman, as he informed Alice that they had left Langdon at breakfast, engrossed in his English letters and newspapers. "He was so deep in one epistle, written in a fair girlish hand, that he did not notice that Howard and myself were all equipped for our ride. And what a glorious day! Do you not think, Miss Vere, there must have been something more than commonly interesting in that letter, to make him forego the pleasure of a ride with you?"

Alice colored, and slightly tossed her pretty head, as she answered, "You forget, Mr. Wallace, that Mr. Langdon never said he would ride with us, when you proposed it last night; and as for his letter, why, if it was only from a sister, with news from home, I can imagine there was much more attraction in it, for such a man, than a ride with two silly girls like Lucy and myself."

"Such a man as Langdon!" echoed Wallace. "You have forgotten, then, my advice about foreigners. That English-

man would be as jealous as Othello, of the woman he loved."

"And would you play his Iago?" asked his gentle inquisitor.

"I would go to the —— ahem! beg pardon, to win your good opinion, Miss Vere."

The lady quietly assured him he would not increase it, by going into such bad company, and that he had better content himself with plain sailing upon a safer sea.

They had now reached the remains of an old family burying ground, with its moss-grown stones, broken and dilapidated, under the shade of those aged oaks, which still spread their sheltering branches lovingly over the neglected and forsaken graves.

I have paused by the last tenement of a dear and well remembered friend, where careful hands had decked the grave with flowers, upon whose fair entablature the record of those virtues live, which in the memory of many who loved that silent sleeper can never die, and I have stooped to pluck a leaf from the green sod, half envying that repose. Again, I have stood beside proud monuments of the wise and great, and it has not even seemed a sad thing to die, as they did, for their destiny was accomplished upon earth. But, gentle reader, brush the mildew from that broken stone, see the name is gone, here is the only item left, "aged 16;" think of all that once was bright and beautiful placed there, in years past, by fond and loving hearts, and ask yourself if it is not a solemn lesson, this lonely and deserted grave? with

none but the birds to tune their wood-notes, in the old trees above it, with only Heaven's dew to moisten the weeds upon its sunken mound.

Ah! then death comes home to us in its true desolation, to be thus forgotten and unknown; save by that watchful Eye which looks down upon the perishing dust of mortal man, with a father's love, and in whose wise Providence every atom is secured; when naught is left, in the fast waning years of fleeting time, for human eyes or human hearts to cling to.

With thoughts less serious than mine, the young equestrians dismounted to examine those crumbling stones, bearing dates which were scarcely legible. Not far off were the ruins of a house, still showing, in its blackened walls, the fierce element that had long since devastated it.

Wallace pointed to the roofless mansion, saying, "There, Miss Vere, are monuments of the incendiary English you so much admire."

"Ah!" she replied, "I have not shut up my books so long as to have forgotten the dates of our Revolutionary war, and I hardly think that time would have left such mementoes just to oblige your patriotic feelings! Come, Lucy, and Mr. Howard, you have studied those mouldy relics long enough; it is time to return."

Again they bounded along the road to town, when a brilliant yellow phaeton came rattling past, and who should they recognise, in its precious freight, but Mr. Adolphus Pippis, with a deep crape band upon his well brushed beaver, and

a servant in mourning at his side. Mr. Adolphus Pippis, gilded by half a million, since the death of an old miserly uncle, had become a most important personage.

So evident was Lucy's appreciation of the handsome equipage, with the coat of arms emblazoned on its panels, that Howard slyly asked, "Do you prefer a phaeton to a curricule, Miss Lucy?"

This mischievous question received no answer, and they were soon before the brick front of the old-fashioned domicile.

In the evening, a few of Mrs. Vere's friends met at her card-table, whilst the younger of the party amused themselves with music and dancing.

The Englishman was there making up for lost time, and Wallace trying to look wretched and to convince Alice that he had been ordered to sea. She seemed incredulous, when Langdon assured her that "the Lieutenant had left his heart in some far distant port, and that he was going on a voyage of discovery after it!"

Wallace declared that he would not have to wander far to find this bit of property, "for that it had been brought to anchor at last in the Home squadron."

Both the young men were in league to discover the mystery of the little ring. Something whispered that there was a secret in its being worn so constantly, and her blushing cheek betrayed her, as she told them "it was the gift of a very dear friend."

To escape any closer questioning Alice turned to Mr. Adolphus PIPPS, who appeared at a most fashionably late hour, elaborately and carefully dressed ; her hand was then claimed for a cotillon, by a friend of Arthur's, and Mr. PIPPS devoted himself, for the rest of the evening, to Lucy Summers, who received his studied attentions with finished coquetry.

Poor Miss Murrell ! Her image was swept from the bosom of her faithless knight, and Lucy, in youth and beauty, reigned triumphant, rising like the phoenix from the ashes of that innocent " first love."

Howard inwardly execrated the yellow phaeton which had dashed his little curricule, or his hopes, into atoms ; he had fierce thoughts of prosecuting his rival and of recovering damages. But Lucy had too much tact to lose so gallant an admirer, and one glance of her lustrous eyes won him back to his allegiance.

The guests were gone, and Alice was standing by her own fireside, in deep thought, twisting the ring upon her finger ; It was not the first time she had been teased about it ; she had serious ideas of putting it away, very safely.

Was Walter's gift so soon discarded ? No, the ring was replaced, but the faintest echo of a sigh trembled around that little circlet, as it rested again upon her finger.

CHAPTER III.

THE moonbeams were glancing brightly upon the slumbering city, silvering the roof-top of a house whose inmates were wrapped in sleep. Not a light gleamed from its casements, the sound of a guitar was heard beneath the window, and a rich, full voice broke the silence of the quiet street.

Starting from her pillow, Alice eagerly listened, then stole out of bed, and flew to wake Lucy.

It was Wallace's voice and Howard's flute ; the girls stood in breathless silence, as Moore's beautiful words trembled, in delicious harmony, upon the night.

"Tho' Love and Song may fail, alas !
To keep life's clouds away,
At least 'twill make them lighter pass
Or gild them if they stay.

"If ever care his discord flings
O'er life's enchanted strain,
Let love but gently touch the strings,
'Twill all be sweet again !"

Song followed song, and "Auld Robin Gray" left Alice's soft eyes dim with tears. Lucy snatched a bouquet from a

vase, and, before her friend could stay the hand, the flowers were tossed from the open window.

“Oh! Lucy, how could you!” exclaimed Alice; but Lucy was peeping through the blinds, and said eagerly, “Look, look! at Frank Howard and your naval hero, and even the magnificent Englishman, all fighting for the bouquet. Ha! Wallace has it, at last. Well he deserved it for making you cry; tears are such a luxury to one who has nothing in real life to weep for, I wish the infection were catching!”

The serenaders were gone, and sleep again visited those young eyelids; but upon the brow of one fair dreamer there is an expression of pain. What affrights her gentle spirit thus? See, how she starts!—the ring upon her finger has become a golden serpent, its shining folds are round her wrist; now it coils about her arm, slowly winding its glittering length towards her heart; a horrid dread creeps over her shrinking frame, she dares not meet its charmed gaze, but with one desperate effort, raises her imprisoned arm, and, with a loud cry, flings the reptile from her.

Cold and faint with terror, she woke. In an instant Lucy was trembling at her side, asking in frightened whispers what had happened; when Alice hurriedly implored her to seek a light.

The taper burnt brightly, and she saw her ring unchanged, but the arm upon which her head was pillowed felt like lead, and remained benumbed until the blood circulated, once more, freely in the transparent veins. Lucy placed the light

behind a screen, and threw herself by the side of Alice, until her friend's low breathing told of calmer rest, when she stole away to her own couch in the next room.

At breakfast Alice was so pale that her mother anxiously asked if she was well. Fortunately the good lady's apartment was not on the side of the house that the serenaders had chosen, so her slumbers had not been disturbed.

When she heard it was only a dream which had robbed Alice of her roses, she shrugged her shoulders impatiently with an exclamation of "Nonsense, child, I don't believe in such stuff as dreams. I shall be glad when you are quietly back at The Oaks; these late hours wont do."

The girls exchanged a look, and Alice had not the courage to talk of last night's delightful music, for Mrs. Vere thought all reputable people should be in bed before the "small hours." She did not by any means approve of midnight prowlers under ladies' windows, singing love-sick ditties; in her days such things were never heard of!

The next day brought letters from Walter to the Major, and one to Arthur from a friend who was travelling in company with young Gray.

Walter merely wrote to say that he had been ill, and was detained at Rome, being still too weak to continue his journey to "the East," and concluded with affectionate remembrances to all at home.

In the closely written pages of the other epistle, Arthur's whole attention seemed engrossed, and when he had finished

reading the letter, he handed it to Alice, saying, "You remember Gaston, and may like to hear something of Walter."

She dared not read it before them all, but sought her own room to open it alone.

"ROME, *January 29th*, 1810.

"DEAR VERE:

"Walter's letters have told you how we chanced to meet in Paris, and all other items of interest were duly forwarded; since then, we have journeyed together very pleasantly, until a few days after our arrival in Rome, when Gray became very ill from the effects of a severe cold he took at Leghorn. I sent for the best physician immediately, but the disciples of Esculapius, here, are opposed to bleeding, and Walter's fever increased alarmingly.

"One morning I had left his side, after a night of anxious watching, to cool my own aching head by a breath of fresh air. I stood lounging before the door of our hotel, when a carriage drove up, and a lady in deep mourning alighted; as she placed her foot upon the step, it slipped, and she would have fallen had I not rushed to her assistance. Her veil was put aside, when oh! ye gods! such a pair of eyes met mine, I scarcely heard her sweetly murmured thanks, as she glided past me to her own apartments.

"I found Walter somewhat refreshed by his nap, and after I had received the doctor's orders, I tried to read, or to write up my journal, but I could not sit still long enough to accom-

plish much, and I never rested until I discovered that the fair unknown' occupied the rooms just below us, that she was the widow of an English officer, with five thousand pounds per annum, and the mother of an only child.

"Not long after this, the little girl was seized with some sudden indisposition, when the same physician who attends Walter, happened to be this lady's medical adviser.

"He mentioned the illness of the young American, and she became so much interested that it ended in discovering, through me, that Walter was a relative; Colonel Gray, her deceased husband, being own cousin to Gray's father. After some days our friend's disease took a more favorable turn, he was able to sit up, in a most becoming 'robe de chambre,' looking very pale and interesting. Many tempting fruits and rare flowers were sent daily, on the part of his fair cousin, whilst I made occasions for meeting her on the stairs, or for receiving a bow from her carriage on the 'Corso,' and went home to dream of that angelic face for the rest of the day. How provoking was Gray's languid apathy, as I raved of her perfections!

"As soon as he was strong enough to acknowledge, in person, her many little kindnesses, he sent his card to announce a visit, and the lady received us with a most enchanting grace.

"The little girl was clinging to her mother's hand, but there was something in Gray's face which won the child to his side, and she was soon chattering gaily to him in French.

“The lovely Mrs. Millicent Gray complimented me upon my excellent care and successful nursing, and praises, from such lips, are enough to turn the brain of any man; even Walter seemed struck by the liquid music of her voice.

“The child climbed upon his knee, and her large blue eyes were closing fast in sleep, when the French ‘Bonne’ carried her off to bed.

“We sat talking pleasantly for hours, and when we rose to take our leave, she gave her hand to Gray, whilst I only received a gracious inclination of her beautiful head.

“Here is an adventure for you, surpassing all I have met before; I can think or speak of nothing but this bewitching widow, and must refer you to Walter’s journal for more serious matter. We both left Paris disgusted with Napoleon’s repudiation of his wife; not even his boundless ambition can excuse the immolation of such a heart as Josephine’s. All Europe holds its breath, and seems to tremble beneath the tread of that mighty genius. Where has he not left the impress of his power? From Italy to Egypt, from Austria to poor struggling, bleeding Spain, there is but one thought, one impulse, and ‘Napoleon’ greets you at every turn.

“How small, how petty we ant-like creatures seem, in our common humanity, swarming over the face of the globe, and sinking into insignificance, as we contemplate the splendor of those deeds whose fame no time can erase.

“Walter still speaks of going to the East, but what are the

Nile and the Pyramids after Rome, what land can be holier to me than Italy? So I do not accompany him in his future wanderings.

"We shall keep him here studying the 'Eternal City' until he is quite strong enough to take care of himself. Our days are spent among solemn antiquities, and our evenings in the 'salon' of a divinity, the fascination of whose beauty I cannot describe. I doubt Walter's being so stoical as to resist such perfection, especially when his fair relative has shown such a tender interest in his convalescence, and lavishes upon him her brightest smiles.

"You will think me mad, unless you have given up your hermit life, with your old law-books, and some warmer love has replaced that fair sister in your heart.

"Write soon, and tell me all the news at home.

"Yours truly,

"FRED. GASTON."

This long letter was read rapidly at first, and then more slowly. Walter had been ill, and the thought filled Alice's heart with overflowing tenderness, when a sudden flush suffused her cheek, and the Ring was no longer upon her finger; for the serpent of her dream had indeed twined its way to that gentle heart. Ah! how sharp its sting! False Viper! it had troubled those pure depths of trusting faith it had tarnished the jewel of confiding truth.

* * * * *

That night Cooper played, as Petruchio, before a crowded house ; Alice's box was the centre of attraction, never had she appeared more brilliant.

“ Her words they robbed the Hybla bees
And left them honeyless.”

CHAPTER IV.

MR. ADOLPHUS PIPPS was the constant and devoted admirer of Lucy Summers, and one auspicious morning she received an elegantly perfumed billet, with a most overwhelming coat of arms, sealing a request for a private interview.

In a spacious saloon, with crimson damask curtains, small oval mirrors, and heavy chandeliers pendent from the stuccoed ceiling, Lucy sat, half reclining upon a sofa, her beautiful arm resting on a cushion, and her eyes upon a book.

Her face was pale as marble, and in the expression of her mouth there was determination and resolution of purpose, as if she had stifled the small, still voice which warned her not to resist its secret pleadings; she looked like one who had strung every nerve to accomplish a sacrifice, the desecration of her own heart with all its young hopes, its truest sympathies.

At the sound of a measured step, her lip trembled for an instant; Mr. Adolphus Pippis made his most profound bow, and then calm and unmoved she listened to his impassioned declaration. Half a million was kneeling at her feet; she

had but to put forth her hand, to speak one little word, and wealth and power would be her own, no longer need she be poor and dependent.

There was a moment's silence ; then the word was spoken very slowly, and the hand pressed to her lover's lips. But there was a condition exacted, and the astonished Mr. Pippas heard that an obstacle still stood in the way of his happiness, as she added, "Nothing could induce me, Sir, to bear your euphonious cognomen ; much as I honor its owner, I could never survive the name of Mrs. Pippas." With all his high self-appreciation and perfect command of temper, the blood tingled in every vein, as Lucy's light laugh smote upon his heart. He recoiled from his beautiful illusion, as if stung ; but Lucy mistook not her power, he could not lightly resign so fair a prize ; there was but one alternative—most adroitly was it presented, and so sweetly pleaded, that the elegant bachelor consented to the time-honored name of "Pippas" being changed, by an act of the Legislature, to his mother's less obtrusive family name of "Wilson." His promise was sacredly given, and Lucy Summers left that room the affianced bride of a man more than twenty years her senior.

Not to her gentle friend was the result of this interview made known, by the lady herself. Mr. Adolphus Pippas informed the Major of his engagement, with its conditions. Whilst Mrs. Vere looked over the top of her spectacles, with her keen grey eyes, and said, in an under tone, "Umph !

ashamed of your name;" and then went on knitting so vigorously, that she did not even vouchsafe an acknowledgment of his bow.

Lucy did not appear until evening; she was still very pale, and seemed determined to avoid meeting Alice's eye. Mr. PIPPS joined them at tea, and before he left that night, a magnificent diamond, an heirloom in the PIPPS family, sparkled upon Lucy's finger.

Alice could not sleep; she rose and passed softly into Lucy's room, to find her still up and dressed; her bright eyes seemed supernaturally large, as Alice knelt at her feet. Looking beseechingly into her face, she faltered out, "Oh! Lucy, what does this mean? Tell me, are you happy, will you not regret the step you have taken?"

Lucy stooped to kiss that fair brow, as she answered, "Do not question me, dear child, about the future, for that I cannot read, and with the present I must not quarrel, since it is the election of my own free will; your guileless nature cannot understand one so heartless and so worldly as I am, Alice—but, look at this pretty bauble on my finger, it would not shame a queenly hand, and he is a right royal lover mine! When that odious name of 'PIPPS' is consigned to oblivion, I shall learn to like him well enough, and he will make me a better husband than that scapegrace Howard!"

As Alice sank to sleep, she murmured, "Can a diamond ring buy such a heart?"

Gossip was busy with this new revelation ; many were the uplifted hands, the whisperings over tea and muffins.

There were frequent ejaculations of "How shocking ! al for money. La ! I wonder how the poor man can be so blind as to fancy she cares for him ; well, she will lead him a pretty dance !"

And how gleefully the palms met together, as they seemed to clap exultingly over the downfall of poor Mr. Pipp's.

————— Lucy was again seated in the drawing-room, but it was with a younger and a handsomer man than the precise millionaire.

Her head was averted, and her long, fair curls half hid the shadows that swept like storm-clouds across her face.

Howard, in that low deep tone that sounds like the smothered anguish of a heart in chaos, cried out, "No, Lucy, I will not, cannot believe it ; your own lips will pronounce it false. Answer me, are you the promised bride of that man ? I cannot speak his name, it seems such a mockery to think of you as 'Mrs.' Pipp's !"

Proud and erect, with lightning flashing from her eyes, she met his reckless laugh, replying in a firm, unfaltering voice—

"It is the name, sir, of a gentleman and an honorable man, a name which no act of his has ever sullied or disgraced ; but even here your sarcasm falls powerless, for so strong is my will, that Lucy Summers will never be Mrs

Adolphus Pippis. Nay, think not that I would break my troth so lightly. My hand is his, but under a contract which shall make him cast his name aside, like a garment it does not please my fancy to assume; and methinks his good mother will bless me, from her grave, for restoring, in honor and pride, the long forgotten and humble line of Wilson."

Howard gazed sadly upon her majestic beauty, as he whispered, "Oh! Lucy—so fair, yet so cold, so early fallen from all that makes life beautiful, so false to every hope of youth, so callous to the sacredness of love! And I, who worshipped, who cherished you, I would have died to win that heart, which has cast away my poor love without a sigh."

Why swayed that tall form like a reed before the blast, what fierce tempest bowed her spirit to the dust, as soft drops fell from those downcast eyes, and she stretched out her hand to ask for mercy, murmuring, "You wrong me, Howard. Judge me not so harshly; be calm, and I will tell you a tale of childhood which will plead for me, perhaps, and leave you still my earnest friend."

"I knew a simple girl, who at an early age was so gentle and so yielding, she might have been incited to the best and noblest aspirations.

"Among her brothers and sisters there played the son of her father's friend, a high-spirited, daring boy; one glance of his dark eye could bend her to his lightest will; he protected her, in their noisy games, with his strong arm, and she loved him, as unconsciously as the flowers drink in light.

"He was sent away to school, but had promised never to forget his little playmate.

"They did not meet again for years; he had grown into a tall, handsome lad, she had now become portionless and dependent upon the bounty of his parents. Her heart spoke plainly—she dared not heed its tumultuous beatings.

"He was very kind, but seemed to have left his boyhood, with its childish hopes, behind him; he only thought of manhood with its strong ambitions, its new and daring impulses. A life of conflict and of danger was his choice. She hid her earnest feelings in careless mirth, and he never guessed the true, warm heart, which so fondly treasured his every look, his every word.

"Then came the time for parting. He was going far away, to distant lands.

"His eye rested thoughtfully upon her for a passing moment, and the crimson flush upon her cheek died out, only to burn more intensely in her secret soul. Poor child! how she suffered as his calm farewell fell upon her ear!

"Time flew, and she became a woman, ambitious only of securing what alone was left her to care for in life."

Lucy had ceased to speak, her hand was raised to Howard's lips, and he left her a saddened and more thoughtful man.

CHAPTER V.

It was the last ball of the season. Mrs. Vere's rooms were brilliantly lighted, and the long piazza opening from the drawing-room was inclosed and hung with garlands of flowers, while lights, twinkling like stars, made soft moonlight in that pleasant promenade.

Alice never looked more enchanting.

The Lieutenant was there very devoted, of course, but somewhat depressed by having received actual orders to sea; and the bevy of beaux, around his beautiful little craft, seemed to his excited imagination a most piratical crew. Even Langdon left him far "to leeward;" and, in his elegance of manner and address, he certainly was no contemptible rival.

Mr. Adolphus PIPPS was too well bred to devote himself exclusively to his lovely "fiancée," and Lucy still attracted by her sparkling wit, men of taste and learning to her side.

Poor Howard fluttered about her, like a moth that could not keep away from the flame which consumed it.

As the band struck up a march, supper was announced; pyramids of flowers decked with little flesh-colored cupids,

ornamented the large "Plateau" in the centre of the table. All that the most delicate palate could approve was offered to the ladies, and, when they retired, supper was served for the gentlemen.

Amidst the general appreciation of the Major's old Madeira and Port, Wallace made his escape with the ladies, as he whispered to Alice—

"You must not drive me from you, or shorten the few moments of happiness which remain to me, in your society."

They reached the piazza, and were standing alone, amidst the garlands and the softened light, when Alice said, "I am really very sorry you are going to leave us, we shall all miss you so much; I, for one, shall often think of those gay 'buttons.'"

"And of nothing more?" he murmured. "It, is, indeed. presumptuous in me to say that I love you, for I have nothing but an honest heart and an untarnished honor to offer, and these, I fear, are valueless in your eyes."

A sweet low voice replied, "Nay, you know not Alice Vere, if you think she scorns the homage of so true a heart, —an affection she is so proud of, that it only pains her the more deeply to feel she cannot return it."

"Is there no hope, Alice?" pleaded his quivering lip. "Must I go forth again a desolate wanderer upon my ocean home?"

Alice's kind heart ached with pity; her little hand was placed lightly upon his arm, as she whispered,

"You will live to bless me yet, for what you now suffer."

"You are indeed an angel of mercy," faltered Wallace ;
"but I shall never love again ; there is no woman on earth, to whom I would offer a broken, ruined heart."

"Nay," reasoned his gentle comforter, "you will find an antidote which will soon banish me from your memory ; I shall ever watch, with a sister's tenderness, over your fate."

Footsteps approached them ; it was Arthur, in search of the lost Pleiad, and she returned to the ball-room, leaning upon Wallace's arm, just as the gay company were dispersing.

Alice was breakfasting with Lucy, in her dressing-room ; they were chatting over their chocolate, when Lisette presented a note to her young mistress, who broke the seal and read,

"S—— HOTEL, *March 20th.*

"I cannot trust myself to see you again, Alice, sad as it is to leave without one glimpse of that dear face ; I feel it is best, for I have no right to pain you by the sight of my distress.

"I send you some flowers ; they are my last offering, and will not be refused. Long before they have withered, I shall be upon the broad Atlantic. Many will love you, Alice, but none with a truer, higher devotion than mine.

"Your memory will be to me a guardian angel.—Farewell, my heart is breaking, as I write the word ; how could I speak it !

"Ever yours devotedly,

"EDWARD WALLACE."

Lucy suspected some tender confession, and Alice's tearful face confirmed the fact, as she hurried from the table to her writing-desk, and wrote with a trembling hand :

"MY DEAR FRIEND:

"I have received your beautiful flowers, and there are tears in my eyes as I thank you for them. When my bouquet is faded, I shall plant the geranium in a vase, and on your return you will see how carefully I have tended it for your sake.

"Think of me as a sister, and accept the little seal I send by Arthur. If I cannot bid you hope, I wish you in its own words, 'peace.'

"That God may guide and bless you, is the prayer of

"Your true friend,

"ALICE VERE."

Turning over the leaves of a heavy folio in the library, stood Arthur Vere, as the door softly opened, and his sister's sweet face peeped in inquiringly.

"Do you want me, Alice?" he asked.

"Yes, Arthur, I have come to beg you to give this note to Mr. Wallace; I know you are going to see him before he leaves."

Their eyes met, and then quickly she hid them upon his shoulder, as he whispered, "Tell me, dear sister, have you sent your heart to sea with that wild rover? There are no secrets between us."

"No, brother," sighed Alice, "I am very sorry for Edward Wallace. We have parted friends, nothing more."

Arthur drew her more tenderly towards him, as he bade her not imagine her lover inconsolable. "Ned is a merry, light-hearted fellow," he added; "I have myself heard him say that he never went into port without falling in love, but that the first dash of salt-water washed it all out again. And I have no doubt he is refreshed by every new plunge."

Alice could not help laughing, as she brushed away her tears, and Arthur received the little box containing the keepsake for his friend.

"I shall never love any one as I do that brother," soliloquized Alice.

And well he deserved the devotion of her loving heart. The ripening fruit of that choice vine clustered around the parent stem, and promised glorious recompense to the faithful bough, which had nurtured its first light tendrils into expanding strength.

In a trial of intense interest, that long engrossed the judicial courts, Arthur Vere had distinguished himself as a most able pleader.

His closing argument was a masterly stroke; amidst the profound silence of a crowded court, whilst those soul-stirring words still vibrated, the venerable judge upon the bench had paid honorable tribute to the powerful eloquence of the appeal. It was a proud moment, when those early laurels lent their lustre to a father's name, and crowned with honor the silvery threads upon his brow.

CHAPTER VI.

It was the last day of March ; the coach was at the door, piled with boxes and baskets ; Mrs. Vere with Alice and Lucy were packed into different corners, whilst the Major took the lead, in an open carriage, and the family left town for The Oaks.

How delightful it is, after months spent within the city walls, to escape from the trammels of fashion and society, and to be alone again with your own thoughts ! Even if there should come unbidden memories or sad regrets to haunt your solitude, they will bear you "healing on their wings," and, in nature's temple, your soul will be tuned to nobler anthems, amidst the orisons of this beautiful creation, as you trace the hand of God in every flower that springs beneath your feet, in every rill that sparkles on your way.

It was night, and the solemn shadows of the old oaks were sleeping upon the earth ; the moon peeped through her fleecy veil, beautiful as the ministering stars around her. Alice was standing at an open window ; her gentle spirit knelt before the throne of the Eternal, asking guidance from on High. Never had her quiet home seemed so dear to her.

And now the sweet chorister of that southern clime poured forth his song to the night, in one wild strain of melody. As he trilled out his imitative lay, one might distinguish in the variety of his notes, many collections from other vocalists of the grove ; there were even snatches from the homely cackle of the domestic fowl, and the deep bass of the croaking frog in the brook, as if he were making sport of them all to amuse his gentle mate, and to fascinate her still more by contrasting his own wondrous powers, as he warbled forth his thrilling song of love.

Arthur Vere was detained in town by business, and Langdon sauntered, from the mere force of habit, to the familiar brick mansion.

He found our young bachelor holding out in solitary grandeur, and, as he sank into a chair, exclaimed, "'Pon my soul, Vere, I can't stand this much longer, the place has become so intolerably dull."

Arthur, to console such desolation of spirit, invited him to dine upon a most inimitable "cooter stew," and his friend's sinking soul revived under these benevolent auspices.

Now, the said Reginald Langdon had been the cause of some discussion between the Major and his lady. Having brought letters from old and highly valued friends in England, Major Vere had proposed asking him to accompany Arthur on a visit to The Oaks. This invitation was, of course, first submitted to the approbation of his wife, when the poor Major's benevolent plans were scattered to the

winds, as Mrs. Vere indignantly assured the discomfited veteran that "it would not do." Shaking her head, she continued, "You have paid the young man every civility; if you mew him up, for a week, in the country with Alice, who knows what might happen! and the world would say we were scheming for a brilliant match, it would be so grand to secure a title in the family. Pshaw! I don't wish the child to marry for these ten years to come."

The good Major was silenced, if not convinced, as he "took refuge behind the columns of his newspaper."

Mrs. Vere had married late in life, and there were some whispers of an early romance, whose poesy had filled that calm heart with love's first euphony; but the magical lute was shattered, and the hand that woke its fairy numbers lay cold in death. That early dream might linger still, in hallowed thought, but her lightest breath had never lent a voice to the sacred memory.

Another suitor claimed, in later days, the lady's hand; again she loved, but it was with a more measured and a wiser experience. As a wife, she was happy in the devotion of an excellent husband; and as a mother, dear reader, you have already known her.

Lucy Summers had returned to her own humble home, and Alice found companionship in her books. What new and exhaustless resources, in her communion with those great minds; how eagerly she followed the illustrious scholar, poet, or historian, in their vivid thoughts, thoughts which

have become immortal links in that vast chain connecting matter with Infinity.

Letters had been received from Jocelin, saying that his ship had been ordered home, before the expiration of the cruise, and that he hoped to meet them, about the last of June, in New York, as his mother wrote they were to pass the summer at the north. Both Mrs. Vere and Alice had tried to persuade Arthur that he could not be left alone, but he was unwilling to desert his office and its duties, and promised to join them later.

Many and busy were the preparations at The Oaks for this momentous journey ; there were medicines to be concocted, receipts written out for the plantation, and the summer clothing to be distributed to the people.

Alice was amusing herself in getting up the trousseau of her waiting-maid, Lisette, and in sorting out all her old ribbons and flowers for the occasion. The consent of Major and Mrs. Vere had been obtained, by the bashful Primus, and an early day was fixed for the wedding.

Most liberal donations were allowed for the supper, and the bridal cake was iced by Alice's own hand. If it might have been a shade whiter, or more evenly frosted, in the eyes of the grateful Lisette it was a most faultless work of art.

And now the eventful time had come ; the bride was decked in white, contrasting most strongly her ebon charms ;

a snowy wreath had replaced the gay bandanna, and Alice had sent for her, to inspect her dress before the ceremony. There was much tittering and whispering behind the door, as Lisette tried to compose herself, before entering the room; she then stood timidly forward for an instant, hid her laughing face in her broad palm, dropped a low courtesy, and disappeared.

They were married; and Lisette's pearly teeth were smiling behind her turkey-tail fan, as she held the hand of her groom, who looked most imposing, in a brass-buttoned coat, yellow vest, and high shirt collars, in which his own shining physiognomy seemed to dilate, in a broad grin of delight.

Daddy Jim's fiddle played a lively jig, which soon lent wings to their heels, and they danced until supper time, when even the bride was not too delicate to enjoy the substantial fare. The feast was prolonged until midnight, when Old Fortune gave his blessing to the married pair, and the company retired "en masse;" wending their way to the Settlement, with one of their own wild melodies, sung in that low, quick recitative by the leading voice, and then caught up in full chorus by the others, in perfect time and harmony.

How often, as a boy, have I drifted slowly down the quiet river, in my canoe, listening to their croning chant over the dead, or their holiday hymns of praise; and the wild duck has winged its way far beyond the range of my gun, before I woke from my dreamy thoughts, lulled into forgetfulness by those distant strains of untutored music. And, again, I remember

when my father, in all the pride of manhood, sat in the stern of his own barge, whilst my mother, beneath the awning, was surrounded by bright little faces, clustering at her knee. The men, in their uniform of blue and white, sang to the measured stroke of the oars ; and even now, I can recall an original improvisation, as they extolled their master's worth, and after wishing him every joy on earth, wound up with the ultimatum of human happiness, in this chorus—

“ A siller spade to dig’e grave,
A goulin chain to let um down !”

The river flows on ; but the barge, and its light-hearted freight, where have they sped ?

Upon the broad ocean of Eternity, a bright ray glances, from those unseen wings, soaring in trackless glory, far beyond this silent shore, where the hoarse waves murmur, in ceaseless flow, and my weary heart responds—

“ I shall go to them, but they shall not return to me.”

CHAPTER VII.

UPON the same fallen tree, where, two years since, Walter had crowned his fairy queen, Alice was seated, reading Milton's "Paradise Lost." She was unconscious of the waning time, when the rustle of steps among the leaves sent a strange, thrilling pain to her heart; the name of "Walter" sprang to her lips, and then died away as quickly, for reason told her he was far beyond the compass of her voice, and chiding her idle fancy, she looked up to greet her brother.

He had a letter in his hand from Gaston; as he held it towards her, he said: "I know not whether to show you this, although it is amusing, and speaks of Walter." "Oh! give it me, Arthur," Alice eagerly exclaimed, and bending over the page, she read:

"PARIS, *April 10th*, 1810.

"DEAR VERE:

"I have received from 'la belle Veuve' a kick which has sent me reeling from Italy to France. Yes, I, the irresistible Frederick Gaston, I, who never before knew the woman I could not conquer, have actually been foiled at last. When I poured out my whole soul in one broad, overwhelming torrent of passion, when love holier and stronger than any I

have before imagined, lent to my words the most burning eloquence, she remained unmoved, cold as the snow upon the Alps. When her calm, firm answer fell on my frenzied soul, I rushed from her madly, almost in anger and despair, for Walter's bracelet encircled that fair arm ; I knew it had been his parting gift, and, now, the sight of its jewelled clasp stung me into jealousy. I may wrong your friend, Vere, but I do not believe in any of this deuced Platonic attachment between a beautiful woman and a handsome man ; and with all his coldness and reserve, I suspect there is an under-current of strong and deep feeling which bears him on, more slowly, but as surely, to the vortex of passion into which we more impulsive mortals are hurried.

"The lovely Millicent is not forgotten in this pilgrimage ; there are long and frequent missives from the banks of the Nile, grateful tributaries to the fair ideal, Platonic love.

"After that superb widow, even Paris seems tame. I arrived here five days after the celebration of Napoleon's marriage with the Archduchess Maria Louisa. The imperial eagle slumbers, for a time, in the boudoirs of the new Empress, but only to soar yet higher ; he will soon weary of inactivity and of this insipid Austrian, after the captivating Josephine.

"I received your answer to my last, and must beg you to write soon again ; your words are 'medicine to a mind diseased.'

"Yours faithfully,

"F. GASTON.

"P.S.—By-the-by, I hear that your fair sister is engaged to an Englishman, with a title in perspective."

Pale as marble, and as motionless, were the lips of Alice Vere, as she mutely handed back the letter. Arthur gently asked, "Dear sister, what pains you thus? Thoughtlessly, I have inflicted this wound; speak, Alice, and say you forgive me."

Those kind, loving words unlocked her frozen tears; she wept convulsively at first, and then more calmly, as she said, "Never ask me why I am so childish. I am weak, dear brother, pray for me, and teach me to be wise and strong like yourself; but never, even between us, let this name again be spoken."

"Nay, Alice," Arthur pleaded, "judge him not so rashly; Gaston was in love and jealous, he knew of nothing but his own foolish suspicion."

Gently she laid her finger on his lips, as if nothing could revoke that sentence, and when she had bathed her aching temples at the spring, passed thoughtfully on, whilst Arthur slowly repeated those old lines from Chaucer—

"Construe the best, believe no tales new,
For many a lie is told that seem'th full true;
And though thou seest a fault right at thine eye,
Excuse it quick.

* * * * *

Lucy had spent several days at The Oaks, and Mrs. Vere

had given a farewell dinner to her friends. The old coach had been rolled out and rubbed, until you could see your face in its shining panels. But Uncle Ned was too venerable to preside over the four-in-hand, on so long a journey, and his mantle had descended upon Tony, his successor to the box. All the heavy luggage had been sent to town, to be shipped direct for New York. The carriage was most scientifically packed; truly its capacious body was possessed of most wonderful elasticity; as Mrs. Vere's incomparable waiting-woman, Luna, presided over the disposition of various baskets and boxes, books, and young hyson, with the small physic chest, and her mistress's own especial pillow. While the large tin-case, containing different compartments for cold meats, and various flasks, was consigned to the Major's own vehicle.

Alice was by her father's side, and the old coach followed at a slower pace, with Mrs. Vere and her endless knitting, whilst Luna groaned inwardly at this uprooting of all household ties, and Lisette sobbed convulsively, upon the steps of the deserted mansion, until roused from her grief by the shining face of her faithful Primus.

Many a long and weary mile our party toiled through the dreary pine forests of North Carolina, to the road-side taverns, or the farmers' houses, at stated distances, for their night's lodging; and what nights were passed, in those miserable accommodations for man and beast! Poor Mrs. Vere clung to her pillow, like a drowning man to a straw,

in this wreck of all creature-comfort; how often Luna turned and aired the sheets by the blazing "lightwood" fire, what shawls and coverlids were pinned up, to screen them from the chill night air, pouring in through unsashed windows, while the stars twinkled between the open rafters above them.

Bright and early they were again upon the road, on a shorter pilgrimage, to a breakfasting-house, where they were revived by their own fragrant tea; and, although Mrs. Vere scorned the dough biscuits, as perfect brickbats, a fresh egg and thin corn pone were more palatable.

At noon they drew up by a shady spring, where the tired horses were watered and the travellers set free; the canister was opened, and they dined under the trees. The case-bottles were now in requisition, and Tony was braced, by a gentle stimulant, after his arduous duties.

Alice sometimes read aloud, whilst Luna gave vent to a continued series of short grunts and starts, upon the front seat; or tired of the old coach, the fair damsel was again seated with her father, driving the ponies; making Tony stare at her wonderful performance, as she flourished her whip in a most masterly style, and left his four-in-hand far in the rear.

Every Sunday they stopped at some of the principal towns on their route; it was strictly a day of rest to our travellers, and to their weary steeds a most blessed sabbatism.

Slowly they climbed the long red-clay hills of old Virginia,

until they reached Charlotte Court-House, where they were compelled, by the lameness of one of their horses, to remain several days. At the plain but comfortable tavern of this county town, they were refreshed by clean beds and sound sleep. Fragrant mint-juleps knocked them up at sunrise ; but this beverage was not appreciated, for none but a true son of the old Dominion can take a julep in all its bearings.

Major Vere had the happiness of here meeting an old and valued friend, one whose name has since become a brilliant epigram in the history of his country.

I see him now with his English top-boots, riding-cap, and whip, tall and straight as a forest pine ; with his small head, beardless chin, and sallow cheek ;—the whole face irradiated by an eye that glowed like the meteor of his own erratic genius. He seemed glad to see the Veres, and insisted upon their accepting his hospitality, at his own estate, on the banks of the Roanoke, although he regretted that business would prevent his being at home. The invitation was accepted as cordially as it was given, and in his own peculiar way he told them, “you must take the first left-hand road, about three miles from this, it’s rather blind at first, but soon brightens.” Alice’s hand still lingered in his, as he looked earnestly into her face with those wondrous eyes, and then uttered an emphatic “God bless you, Honey !” and she was in the coach once more, dreaming of that strange, fascinating gaze, which seemed to read her inmost soul. Mrs. Vere was still talking of the eccentricities of

their friend, when they drove through the gate leading to his residence, a log-cottage of rude proportions, but most scrupulous neatness; where his butler, old Essex, received them with that finished courtesy of manner which so highly entitled him to the panegyric of his master, when he said "that Essex was one of the last real gentlemen left in Virginia."

The Major found much to interest him in the farm, the tobacco fields, and the magnificent stock of blood horses, whilst the ladies, within-doors, looked over rare collections of books and curiosities. Directly opposite a more modern mansion was being built, for the accommodation of visitors; but nothing could ever induce the proprietor to give up his own log-cottage and its associations.

Essex offered the best and choicest wines, with lofty pride, to his master's guests, and they were treated with the most unbounded hospitality.

The next day the horses were as fresh as ever, and after the Major had left a sterling acknowledgment of their liberal entertainment with those faithful servants, they bade farewell to the secluded home of John Randolph of Roanoke.

The next resting-place of any importance was Washington, where they were presented to Mrs. Madison, who received them with charming affability. She stood at the head of the oval-room, the centre of a distinguished group; her rose-colored turban vying with her complexion in brilliancy. In

her sprightly vivacity of conversation, she was eminently calculated to attract the popular taste; although, wanting in that dignity of presence and refinement of manner which so distinguished her successor as Lady President.

The Capitol and White House were still in an unfinished state, and, after they had seen all that could afford interest, they left the seat of government for Baltimore, where they remained several days at Gadsby's hotel, and received much kindness and attention from many excellent friends. After a short but pleasant visit, they were again upon the road to the city of "Brotherly-love," where they passed a quiet Sunday, and about the end of the ensuing week, the yellow coach drew up, after a journey of five weeks, at the door of the City Hotel, and our travellers were in New York.

In those good old days, the élite of society resided at the lower end of the city, and the Battery was the fashionable promenade; no noisy, distracting omnibuses then rattled over the stones, making the window-panes shake until your home seems an incessant earthquake. No; Broadway, then, was a pleasant walk; a place where conversation was carried on without pain or effort; one strolled decently and leisurely along, not, as now, at a rapid, tearing gait, as if the whole town were rushing to a conflagration, or each striving to outrun the other in the race of life, jostling the timid or the "greenhorn" off the side-walk, with hands clasped upon their pockets, suspicious of their brother in poverty or disgrace; with one aim, one soul, one existence; the incessant

striving for gain, the restless craving for wealth. Not that I would decry the honest industry or commercial success which has built up this fair city, and crowned in its supremacy the Empire State. But, when a man's worth is measured by his dollars ; when riches constitute all that entitles him to distinction in society ; I say that this worship of the golden calf is so hollow and so false, that the time will come when a stronger and more powerful voice shall denounce such idolatry, and point to higher and nobler adoration than that of poor, filthy lucre.

CHAPTER VIII.

STILL, peaceful as New York was in 1810, compared with the Babel of the present day, to Mrs. Vere and Alice, Broadway was a most exciting and distracting scene.

Most of the families of their acquaintance had left town, for their country-seats on the North River; but our heroine found ample occupation in the fashionable stores of Vandervoort and Flandin, and at Richards's the jeweller, where she selected a set of pearls, as a birth-day gift from her father. The dress-maker, Madame Bouquette, was in requisition, and at Mrs. Ruthven's the milliner, many new and elegant devices were displayed. In this fashionable emporium, the most *recherché* bonnets were shown, but Mrs. Vere looked down upon these new-fangled conceptions with the most supreme contempt; they were perfect mushrooms to her own stately black silk, which nothing could induce her to alter, in form or size, and she ordered a new one built, precisely upon the same model. Not so, the younger lady; she was infinitely bewildered by the many beautiful and costly articles at the different *magasins*. The bills poured in, for her own little purse was soon emptied, and the good

Major rubbed his eyes in astonishment at the constant demands upon his pocket-book.

In the evening, they strolled to the Battery, or to Con-toit's gardens for an ice-cream, and at night the Theatre offered many attractions to strangers.

The Veres were looking anxiously from the windows of their parlor, when a hack drove up to the hotel; the door opened, and a young man sprang from the carriage. The Major rushed into the street, and in another instant Jocelin was folded in his mother's arms. Alice looked up, half smiles, half tears, into that manly sunburnt face; he had altered, but there was the same bright glance and happy laugh, as he caught that sister to his heart with all a brother's pride, marvelling at the perfection of her beauty.

What a pleasant, merry party they were, that day around the dinner-table; how much Jocelin had to tell, how much to ask of home and his "dear old Moses," as he styled Arthur, in the merry term of boyish days, "when he would preach law and order so gravely, and I, in my heedless, helter-skelter way, would kick his logic to the deuce. Nay," he added, "sweet sister, I have grown a better boy now, and the good lessons of my happy home are stowed away as safely as the Bible in my locker."

After the celebration of the 4th, our party left the city. It was the first time Mrs. Vere had ever seen a steam-boat, and with no slight misgiving, she embarked upon her summer tour. While the mysterious agent was wheezing

and puffing most asthmatically along, the old lady sat as if expecting some fearful explosion; and when the boat was propelled at the rate of ten miles an hour, she looked upon their progress through "the treacherous element," as something marvellous. Alice and Jocelin were admiring the beautiful Hudson, in all the variety of its wooded banks and gently sloping farms, dotted here and there by a handsome residence or a pretty villa; when gradually, the scenery became wilder and more impressive, as they glided under some frowning hill or towering rock. What a fair page is opened in nature's volume, as you trace that glorious river, in its bright course, shadowed by dark mountains, tinged with living hues from creation's pencil; and how ardently you adore the Hand that has written in such graphic fragments his own Almighty power and boundless skill. It was late in the evening before Alice left the deck; she had watched the sunset's last blush upon the water, and now the moon silvered stream and grove, its soft light sleeping in the shadows of the Küaterskill.

On entering the ladies' cabin, it looked like anything but a place of repose; gossiping women telling their whole family histories to some gaping listener, children crying vigorously, and mothers stuffing them away by pairs into narrow berths; then there was a general and public disrobing, young ladies screwing up their hair in newspaper, and an endless tying-on of night-caps, before the glass. All these ghostly preparations seemed to indicate a more peaceful dis-

solution, as they turned in, tier upon tier, for the night. But there was a poor soul with a shocking cough, and now her neighbor just above trumpeted out a snore that would wake the dead, or a puling baby filled up the pauses with its wailing cry. With Christian resignation, the black silk bonnet was laid aside, but nothing could induce Mrs. Vere to climb into that bed between two planks, or to loose one hook or stay from her dress. She remained bolt-upright in her chair, until day, whilst her faithful Luna most philosophically slept upon a mattress at her feet; and Alice reclined upon a sofa, more amused than annoyed by this novel glimpse of the pleasures of travelling with the million.

The next morning they were in Albany, where they took a post-coach to Ballston Springs, and reached the "Sans Souci" about dusk. Mrs. Vere and her daughter were too much fatigued to appear at tea, and the good lady was soon comfortably established in her own rooms.

It seemed very strange to Alice, that breakfasting saloon, with long tables, where parties or coteries were seated talking very fast, and eating still faster. The places appropriated to the Veres were directly opposite a pleasant looking set; but how awkward this being face to face with perfect strangers, and men too! Why Alice could not raise her eyes from her plate; she was sure she should starve rather than eat before those people, watching every mouthful she put to her lips. Certainly her appearance had made a sensation; she was something new. The belle "par

excellence," Miss Tillton, shrugged her shoulders, and said to an elegant Frenchman on her left, "*pas grande chose*." Whilst the fastidious Count raised his eye-glass for an instant, as Jocelin turned his head away, and then dropped it with a most complacent smile, as he murmured, "*Ma foi! je la trouve charmante*."

And this was enough to seal Miss Tillton her foe for life, for praise from the Count de Garenville was of unquestionable value in the opinion of the fashionable clique at Ballston Spa.

Was it possible, that but three short days had passed, and Alice Vere was at the same table, both talking and eating very naturally, and Monsieur le Comte was by her side, apparently a most piquant addition to her breakfast!

There were suspicions among the men, that this Count de Garenville was an adventurer, whose broken fortunes were to be restored by the golden favors of some rich heiress. But the softer and more charitable sex thought only of his handsome face and his courtier-like address; then he had such exquisite taste, such refined tact, that his "*esprit du salon*" established the code of fashion among the ladies, without doubt or controversy.

There were some new arrivals at the Sans Souci; a pretty damsel attended by a maiden aunt, of whose well-filled coffers this child of her adoption held the key. The lady and her niece were not strangers to the Veres. Alice had known Marion Wallace in early childhood, before the death of a

widowed mother had consigned the little girl to the care of her nearest relative, Miss Menlove; whose residence in Fourth street, Philadelphia, was like her own person, very tall, very dull, and somewhat faded in its appointments. But through those sombre quiet rooms, a sunbeam glanced, making the place beautiful, and the cold heart warm, for Marion was the very impersonation of joy, with her dancing curls and laughing blue eyes, as she hovered around the tall cap, during the afternoon's nap, pulling out the knitting, or stealing the gold snuff-box from the capacious pocket. And now the "Bonnie Beam" shone in joyous beauty, peeping like light from behind a cloud, by the side of her grave aunt, and beyond the red brick walls of her trim home. To Alice there was a more recent interest and tender association, in Marion being the only sister of poor Ned Wallace.

Jocelin was very near the little "Beam," but "the cloud" was there too, and somewhat lowering in her dark garb, she seemed doubtful of that giddy Beam. For never was name, in its literal signification, a greater antithesis than Miss Menlove's, when she shrank from the "perfidious sex" as she would have done from the bite of a rattlesnake.

The Cloud had floated once upon a summer sky and brightly too, until wooed by a zephyr's soft caress, gaily it was wafted on, fanned by that gentle breath. But the treacherous rover sighed to a rosier tint upon a fairer sky, and she was left to gather up her mantle alone, and in fierce wrath, to frown down upon the world and all its vain emotions.

CHAPTER IX.

IN a certain cosy billiard-room, sat several ladies, with their tambour-frames; there were silks to be sorted, and skeins to be untangled; certainly, the pretty "Beam" had caught in her perplexing web, something not very like a fly, for it had human hands, which were most patiently enchained in those soft meshes. Positively it was a man! But, "the cloud" had floated off to the spring, in company with the Major and Mrs. Vere, to drink up the sparkling drops of those far-famed waters, in their cooling and anti-bilious properties; truly she had imbibed them freely, and in her exhilaration, she forgot the "little Beam" at home.

Monsieur le Comte was teaching Alice billiards; she had cannoned upon the two reds and pocketed the white ball; and the Frenchman was thrown into ecstasies of delight at the success of his pupil.

Miss Tillton was trying her tactics upon a new subject, and another foreign interest engrossed her, in the shape of the Baron Von Whiskinheimer, a very agreeable German, who spoke English with a strong guttural, which was charming. "After all, that *petit-maitre* French accent is so

insipid!" Miss Tillton was surrounded by many dashing beaux from her own city. She was a magnificent brunette, with flashing eyes and proudly swelling form, the heiress of untold wealth, and the most exquisitely dressed person at the Springs; she could venture to wear any fashion, however "outré," for her faultless taste made it at once the most becoming mode of the day. How she scorned the humbler toilettes around her, as she said with a curling lip, "Just look at that little Southerner! Why, I could dress up a broomstick with more effect."

The coach and four had arrived, for Tony's bewildered brain had been safely piloted over the Highlands, by a more knowing head, and again he made his bow to his honored mistress, as he received her orders for the day.

It was a pleasant afternoon, the carriage was in waiting, and Mrs. Vere with Miss Menlove were handed to it by the gallant Major, who had the temerity to accompany the latter lady, in such close juxtaposition as a front seat affords.

The little "Beam" could not be entrapped into the old coach, in spite of many secret manœuvres on the part of her watchful aunt; she was wonderfully constant at present, preferring to shine in one spot; and Alice had undertaken the charge of chaperon during their evening walk to the Lover's Leap.

Miss Tillton swept past them on horseback, attended by the ruthless Baron Von Whiskinheimer, who was made to ride *nolens volens*, although neither his brute nor his own cor-

poral self seemed to entertain the least understanding of each other.

The pretty pedestrians strolled through the woods, but "the Beam" had flitted on far ahead with Jocelin, and Alice was diverted by the animated gesticulation of "Monsieur le Comte."

Shall we follow that "Will-o'-the-wisp," and watch her more closely than did her young protectress? She was talking of herself, as she exclaimed, "Yes, I am a little riddle! From my very birth I was a mistake, for I ought to have been a boy. My father had set his heart upon it, and had named me, before I saw the light, after his valued friend and leader General Marion; and the disappointment of my turning out a girl, after all, was so great, that my poor mother, to appease his indignation, gently suggested that the child should still be called 'Marion;' whilst her loving heart softly whispered, her own sweet name of Mary."

Jocelin agreed with her perfectly, that "Marion Wallace" was not a pretty combination; a shorter one, of about four letters, would make the Christian name perfect in its harmony to his ear.

This enigma outriddled hers, she could not guess what he was driving at; and, after a few moments' silence, she said, "Did you know that my brother Edward loved your sister Alice, and that she refused him? Child as I am, he told me all about it, before he sailed for the Mediterranean. I love this brother better than anything on earth, so you may

believe that his sorrows are mine. I can be grave sometimes, and I longed to see one he so idolized; at the same time, I fancied she had no woman's heart, and that I should never forgive his cruel beauty. I confess this, now, because she has already won my affection and entire confidence."

Here the subject of conversation overtook them, and they turned their steps towards the Springs.

The coach was on its return to the "Sans Souci," when a riderless horse dashed past, and Miss Tillton rode rapidly towards the carriage; in a short, decisive manner, she then told them that the Baron Von Whiskinheimer was thrown, and, she feared, much hurt. Immediately the horses' heads were turned, preceded by the flying artillery of Miss Tillton's charms. The Baron was found insensible, and Mrs. Vere had him carefully lifted into the coach by the Major and Tony, whilst Miss Menlove hastily bundled out, declaring she could never abide "a dead **man**," and the Major, conscious of not coming under this head, offered his arm in their walk to the hotel.

The motion of the carriage had revived the poor Baron; he opened his eyes, but the pain of his crushed and broken arm made him quickly close them, with a stifled groan. Mrs. Vere did all that sense or motherly tenderness could suggest, for the comfort of the young German.

When they stopped before the hotel, he was conveyed to his apartment, followed by Mrs. Vere, who never left him until the arm was set by a skilful physician. After she

had seen to every arrangement that could conduce to the patient's relief, Luna was installed as nurse, and the good lady sailed into the drawing-room, to report the adventure to the little group around the card-table; while Miss Tillton ejaculated to a bevy of beaux in the next room, "What a stupid bore the man was, not to know how to ride!"

The "Beam" not only shone but sang divinely, as in a clear, birdlike voice, she carolled forth her simple ballads to an entranced circle around the piano. There was pathos in those thrilling tones, and tears were in Jocelin's eyes, as he listened to her sweetly warbled songs.

The next excitement at the "Sans Souci" was the arrival of Arthur Vere and the handsome Englishman; but, unfortunately for many cherished visions and airy castles built by young ladies of poetic temperament, Reginald Langdon was to remain only a few days at the Springs. He had received letters from home, informing him of the approaching nuptials of his younger sister, and desiring his presence at the wedding.

Arthur Vere, the shy, reserved student, seemed little impressed by the battery opened against him; and Jocelin had deserted his "Sunbeam" to be near that loved brother again, but Marion was afraid of that pale, grave face, and those earnest eyes, which were often watching her; as Jocelin returned to her side, she whispered, "Dear me, I can see him turning over the leaves of my silly little heart, one by one; I only wonder he should think it worth reading!"

It was the grand ball of the season. Miss Tillton was in the zenith of her beauty, her dress the wonder of the room; a silken tissue over white satin, embroidered in amber-colored beads, and a coronet of topaz in her dark hair, gathering up its folds in one blaze of splendor.

The Count de Garenville approached her with an exclamation of delight, "Mais, Mademoiselle! vous êtes en Reine."

The haughty head was slightly inclined, as she acknowledged his admiration, emphatically saying, "Oui, c'est vrai, mais je n'aurais point de cœurs français pour sujets!"

With an incredulous smile, he whispered, "Nous verrons," and then passed on.

The little "Beam" floated along in silver and azure, her bright curls playing around the smiling dimples on her cheek, like the happy ripples of her own joyous spirit.

Alice, in her pearls, was so beautiful, that even Miss Tillton condescended to notice her "parure." Reginald Langdon was the favored attendant, and had suddenly discovered that he had not forgotten how to dance, while the Count consoled himself with the prejudice of his countrymen, as he contemptuously muttered, "Ce n'est qu'un Anglais!"

The very satirical Misses Drifton, with auburn hair and freckles, were commenting upon the flirtations, and saying many smart things, which proved only acrid drops, not worth collecting.

Arthur Vere was talking to an early friend, a tall, pale girl, with lustrous eyes and drooping form. She was a broken

lily, but the flower would be culled in a brighter and a better world. That gifted girl was a chosen spirit, early called and early tried, her intellectual beauty already shadowed by the angel wing.

To one so gentle and so pure, converse with a kindred soul was an exquisite enjoyment, but many a weary hour of pain and suffering made these moments shorter, and more rare. She thought not of earth-born love, but prized this one faint glimpse of that secret ideal she had enshrined in her own heart; she blessed this ray upon her darkened path, as a gleam from the unknown bliss which should crown her in Paradise with Heaven's true element of love.

‘He prayeth best, who loveth best
All things both great and small,
For the dear God who loveth us,
He made and loveth all.’

It was not often that Constance looked upon her brightly fluttering sisters in the giddy dance. The noisy ball-room seems not a fitting spot for her pale face, or these sad thoughts; but, reader, she was there for a short space, and I could not pass her by.

The Baron Von Whiskinheimer, with his left arm still in a sling, was the object of much interest; his honest heart remained true to his steadfast friend, and no younger dame could charm him from his reverence for the lofty turban and rustling silks of Mrs. Vere.

Miss Tillton danced a “Menuet de la Cour” with the Count

de Garenville; and what a dancer he was, such soul in the expression of his foot, and such a pump and silk stocking, and then his leg! Yes, dear reader, don't blush; in those days people talked very boldly of their legs, and boasted of them, too—at least, I can answer for the men—and now we do not even suspect such things! In the fashionable pantaloons, reaching to the ankle, the most ill-shapen calf is happily concealed, and the spindle shank redeemed from public censure. Like "charity," truly, it "covereth a multitude of faults."

The ball wound up with a "Contredanse," which Jocelin and the "Beam" thought very refreshing, after "that egotistical minuet, so exclusively for two." But the dance was over, the room seemed oppressively warm, it was pleasanter upon the piazza, and at its end stood the little "Beam"—alone? Oh! no, she had not forgotten that, in the rule of simple addition, one and one make two, and it is too good a rule to cavil at. There were two pair of eyes looking up at the stars, when a cloud came over the face of the moon; it must have been Miss Menlove's shadow, as she piped out, in her shrill falsetto, "Come in, child, out of that night air."

The room was thinning fast, and Reginald Langdon stood leaning over Alice's chair; there had been some light wager between them about his return to America. He declared that there was too much of interest, too many happy memories, and too much still to be explored in the New World, to permit him to rest long contented away; but Alice still shook her head doubtingly as her mother joined them.

Langdon was to leave at an early hour the next day ; the ladies had now reached the staircase leading to their apartments ; that sad little word "good bye" must be spoken, it was said at last, very slowly, as Alice's hand was pressed for a moment in his, and then they diverged in opposite directions to their rooms.

The Major had retired at an early hour to seek refuge in his magazines ; he was fast asleep, seated in a rocking-chair, in his green dressing-gown and slippers, with his extremities, not legs ! upon another chair, the book in his hand, the spectacles on his nose, reading in the dark, for the candle was expiring in the socket, as Mrs. Vere opened the door. The lady, with her usual providence, had supplied her own "sperms," and this consumption of a whole one in a night, was considered a capital crime in her economy of law and order. No more pleasant dreams, dear Major ; and we are too generous to wish to share your nice little curtain lecture, for Mrs. Vere could serve up one "à la Caudle" to perfection !

All night long that little word "good bye" haunted the slumbers of number 12, but he was roused bright and early, with no chance of meeting a response, as he whispered, in passing Alice's door, "Good bye !"

CHAPTER X.

IN the moonlight, upon the piazza, stood the Count de Garenville; not studying the stars, but Alice's fair face, as he spoke of his own land, telling her he had pined in exile from "la belle France," that the only ray of joy in this "triste séjour" had been the revelation of loveliness like hers; and now he would humbly ask some memento of their last dance, the little glove she had worn, or the fairy slipper that had graced her foot. Alice hesitated a moment, and then glancing archly at the Count, she replied, "Ah! Monsieur, your wish is granted, upon condition that I, also, may receive something of yours in return."

The Count was intoxicated with delight; there was nothing she could name, even a miracle, which he would not perform at her request. Again the lady glanced at that unrivalled "toupet," as she slowly answered, "I would prize, beyond all else, a lock of your luxuriant hair."

Monsieur de Garenville bit his lip with vexation, for he prided himself upon his immaculate "perruque" as a most perfect artifice; but his sense of the ridiculous overcame his mortification, and he exclaimed, "Ah! qu'elle est espiègle!"

Rapturously declaring "that his heart, his head, his existence were hers, and that he implored her acceptance of a name not unworthy her adoption."

She replied, "I am very ungrateful, Monsieur; your generosity is lost upon me. I can merely give you, in return for so much honor, an empty glove, for I have nothing to place within it, and my heart is as empty as the glove, in all save kind wishes for your welfare."

Once again the Count urged his suit with greater ardor, but it was only the more decidedly discouraged, and he had too much tact, or presence of mind, to allow this little affair to become public. That Miss Tillton might not suspect it, his manœuvres were most skilfully planned, and his desertion of Alice was so gradual that it attracted no notice; whilst Miss Tillton triumphed in the belief that she had thrown "the little Southerner" into the shade, and that the Count was weary "of such game!"

Miss Menlove must have become stone-blind, for the pretty "Beam" evidently thought the "rule of three" a great bore, and was glad to escape to simple addition; with Jocelin ever at her side, to prove her theory correct.

But this constant proximity to mankind acted upon a lady of Miss Menlove's temperament as a perpetual irritant, and her nervous system was so seriously affected, that she had determined to return to the sanctity of her own quiet home in Fourth street. "The Beam" and Jocelin had glided off at twilight to the "Lover's Leap," where he was inspired by

the renown of some desperate wight, who, in the same luckless plight as himself, had dared a plunge which has furnished matter of speculation to many a smitten pair, and given rise to heroic vows and fierce declarations, suggested by the scene and place. But the gentle Beam asked no such fearful proof of love; she believed all he told her, and there was no yawning precipice to divide them. Thoughtless Beam! She forgot Miss Menlove and her antipathies.

On his return to the hotel, Jocelin at once sought an interview with that lady. They had been closeted but a short time, when our hero rushed out, pale and speechless, as if he were about to make that last desperate plunge, after all. The little Beam had taken refuge in her own room, when the door opened, and her Aunt, seating herself directly in front of her, scanned the blushing face with those searching eyes and that dark scowl which portended so much. Poor little Beam! how she trembled beneath it, and when Miss Menlove asked, in her shrill piping tone, "Well! little minx, what does all this mean? Hey! I hear that you have been listening to the fine speeches of that conceited youngster, and that you return his love. Fiddlesticks! such children to play with edged tools; indeed, you may just forget Master Jocelin's existence. Why, I am astonished at you, Marion, to believe what a man tells you! They make it a point of honor to lie to women. No, I have given the lad a piece of my mind, and sent him off with a good dose of common sense."

"Poor, dear Jocelin!" sighed Marion. Here she was most solemnly admonished not to mention that name again.

The little Beam now fell into hysterics which defied all palliatives, and, by night, the poor child was ill and feverish, when Miss Menlove became alarmed and called in a physician. All night the Beam tossed restlessly on her pillow; there was no peace, no hope for her now; and the next day she lay very pale and still, as Miss Menlove bent anxiously over her couch.

Not one mouthful would "the Beam" eat, she was determined to starve herself to death. Again she moved about the room, but so wan and sad you would never have known her, and the doctor said, mysteriously, that the young lady had something on her mind, some secret trouble. Miss Menlove sighed; an auspicious sigh! "The Beam" still starved herself upon a few crumbs a day, and was too weak to leave for Philadelphia.

The Major held a conference with Miss Menlove; he promised that Jocelin should leave the Springs instantly, if she would relieve the poor child from her imprisonment. Whilst they were talking, a little bit of folded paper was slipped under the door of the Beam's cage; she flew to pick it up, and read those loving words, again and again. Jocelin was almost frantic, he could not resign her, and had asked her to give him some hope, anything would be better than this uncertainty, death itself. Quickly the little hand wrote, on a mere scrap of paper, "I love you, and is not this enough to

bid you hope !” The billet was then pushed under the door with a knitting needle, just as Miss Menlove stalked into the room. She looked at the swollen eyes, the pale cheeks, and for the first time stooped to kiss them, as she said, “ You will be very ill, Marion, if you do not give up this silly fancy.”

But the Beam threw herself upon her knees, and, in a flood of tears, told her she could never relinquish her love for Jocelin, and then implored her, by every tender epithet, by every coaxing, winning way, to make them happy ; they would never ask to see each other again, unless she sanctioned it, but, that if she loved her, she would grant their prayer.

And now the soft arms were around her neck, and the blue eyes looking, through their tears, right into the cloud ; it was melting into mist beneath the influence of that gentle “ Sunbeam,” and Miss Menlove looked down relenting. Jocelin was the happiest, the most dutiful of lovers, he promised to wait an eternity, to go to sea just when Miss Menlove ordered him ; and “ the Beam,” how bright she was again, her roses had come back, with somebody else, only she did not like the sound of that horrid sea.

The engagement was to be kept a profound secret, Mrs. Vere and Miss Menlove quite agreeing that the young people were mere children, the Beam only sixteen, and Jocelin just three years older.

The idea of their marriage was as far removed from Miss Menlove’s mind as the antipodes. It would take time to

accustom her to the idea of a man being allowed free entrance into that abode of maiden propriety in Fourth street.

Poor soul! how glad you were to take flight at last, with your precious "Beam," and to be once more beneath the grateful shelter of your own roof.

What a quantity of paper and pens "the little Beam" had invested her pocket-money in, and such a very tender seal, with ink enough to last a year. She hated letter-writing once, as much as "the rule of three;" but now she was perched at her desk the livelong day, scribbling to her "poor, dear Jocelin."

The next grand affair at the "Sans Souci" was the Count de Garenville's declaration of love to Miss Tillton; but the rubicund face of Papa Tillton was somewhat choleric in hue. His fortune had been honestly and hardly earned between the close red brick walls of his wareroom in Pearl street, and he had no idea of that "confounded Frenchman" running off with his "real estate;" but the young lady was independent of her parents; a most indulgent progenitor had left her some valuable stock-in bank, and to the imperious Delphine what were bolts and bars, or papa's wishes, upon a subject which alone concerned herself!

The Count appeared resigned, and was full of deference for the indignant sire.

Delphine had been ordered to pack up instantly; Mamma

Tillton wrung her hands and wept in silent agony, whilst the lady's maid packed tray after tray and box after box, and Delphine, calm and collected, gave her orders as to the disposition of her wardrobe.

Heads were nodding, and voices whispering mysteriously to each other over the breakfast table, which had come down to one forlorn hope, in that long room at the "Sans Souci." "Dear me! do you know what's happened? Why, the Tilltons were all ready this morning to leave for town; they went to their daughter's room, and found it empty! Only think, the young lady had gone off in a hired chaise with the Count de Garenville at midnight!"

"I knew it would end just so!" exclaimed the auburn-haired Misses Drifton, most remarkably freckled by daylight, but very animated, under the present exciting topic of conversation.

"Yes," averred the elder Miss Drifton, "I was sure that spoilt child would have her own way, and it served the old lady right. I don't believe a word of all that crying and wringing of hands upstairs; she knew all about it from the first, and was perfectly delighted with the idea of her daughter being a countess."

Here a tall girl, with a slight obliquity of vision, and an aristocratic name, exclaimed, "Why, do you know that Pa says he remembers when Mr. Tillton peddled his wares about the street! Grandpa drove a chariot then, and now they are tiptoppers, and we are not fashionable because we are poor."

"Anyhow, she squinted straight that time," whispered Miss Drifton to a superannuated beau on her right.

What food for gossip this elopement furnished for days to the small circle collected in the parlour at the "Sans Souci!"

Crowds were leaving, and amongst them the Veres, on their way to pay a visit, on the North River, to their friends the L——s.

Upon the banks of the Hudson stood a stately mansion, surrounded by beautiful grounds, sloping to the river's edge. And what a paradise to Alice seemed that charming residence, after the noise and bustle of the Springs.

The whole establishment was conspicuous for its stately elegance, presided over by the daughter of their host, one who did the honors of her father's house with a grace, dignity, and affability, that impressed all who ever knew her so strongly, that, even now, in the long lapse of years, I can recall her queen-like air and the winning smile which redeemed her noble presence from all pride or haughtiness.

Quite a party were assembled in the octagon billiard-room, with its niches for statues, and its lofty windows commanding beautiful views of the Kääterskill Mountains.

Near one of these windows stood a tall, graceful figure, of a beauty so rare and so heavenly, one felt, even then, it was too bright in its touching purity, to last. Those dark blue eyes, in whose peculiar depths were reflected the inmost thoughts of a singularly refined and cultivated mind, were

raised to the face of a gentleman with whom she was in earnest conversation.

Alice Vere was struck as much with the countenance of the companion of the lady as with her spiritual beauty ; his was a face full of playful mirth, with open brow, dark hair and eyes, illumined by that intellect which has since enrolled his name, among the first, upon the newly opened pages of American literature.

In the large drawing-room, after tea, were parties playing chess and backgammon ; the harp was uncovered, and another fair daughter of the mansion drew from its chords deep notes of harmony, or their youthful hostess sang to the piano, in her low, sweet voice, Moore's exquisite melodies.

Later in the evening, the younger part of the company were enticed, by the beautiful night, to wander upon the portico ; seating themselves on its steps in the bright moonlight, those gentle voices pleaded for a story, from one whose portrait memory has already sketched.

In his musical voice and quaint drollery of manner he told them first the history of a little dog, which elicited much merriment from the delighted group. " One more," and " only one more," was then earnestly besought.

They had taken him in a happy mood, and, after a few moments' thought, he gave them a wild story of more thrilling interest, of a mysteriously haunted house in their neighborhood, tenanted by a restless ghost. The tale was ended, and many of his listeners were filled with superstitious dread,

as they retired noiselessly to rest, frightened at their own footfall in the hall, and hurrying past dark corners to their rooms.

In recalling those early stories of Washington Irving's, we might suppose them the pencil etchings of his beautiful legends of the Hudson, which have since been read by young and old as magical pictures of nature's revealing, snatched by his gifted pen from the heights of the Kääterskill, and glancing upon the bright stream which will bear his fame to future ages.

The Veres parted from their hospitable friends, with grateful remembrance of their charming visit. In after years, Alice often thought of that little group and those three Graces, clustering together in loveliness in their pleasant home; little did she dream how soon those fair blossoms would be severed. Scarce a year had fled, before that blooming cheek and lip, that tall, slight form, drooped like a fading flower; sweet rose, thou hast long passed from earth, to bloom more brightly in that immortal home where no blight or care can ever harm thee more. And that glorious one, who was so peerless in her lofty nature, so strong in the full maturity of her beauty, you would have deemed that time or death had no power to crush so bright a spirit; she, too, sank to sleep when life was all joyous, and hope still young. Her grave is in a foreign land, and her memory in the hearts of all who loved her.

CHAPTER XI.

FASCINATING Broadway! how quickly the mornings fly in that crowded mart of fashion. There were faces which had been seen at the Springs, greetings from pleasant acquaintances, belles in their autumn bonnets, and elegant youths in dashing vehicles.

Mr. Adolphus Pippas was in New York, selecting a "trousseau" for his bride, and Mrs. Vere and Alice were to assist in the choice of her cashmere shawl.

There were secret consultations held in a certain china store, in Maiden lane, and long mornings were spent at Christy's, in looking at various patterns, and ordering whole sets of glass and china shipped for the South.

The good Baron Von Whiskinheimer, the only foreigner Mrs. Vere had ever admitted within the precincts of her Christian charity, was their constant attendant.

Jocelin had gone to Philadelphia, the little Beam was tired of writing and had coaxed her Aunt just to let her see "that odious man" once more.

Alice was seated before her glass, a fashionable hairdresser had been sent for; and the illustrious Toussaint, with his

good-tempered face, small ear-rings, and white teeth, entered the room, his tall figure arrayed in a spotless apron.

The curling tongs were heated, and there was a perfume of scorched paper as Toussaint commenced operations. Oh those cruel scissors, they had no mercy upon the beautiful hair. What an execution! Alice shrank from the sight of her tortured head, which, in a hundred "papiflotes," seemed to stand upon end in every direction; whilst Luna held the brushes or heated the irons, in silent amazement at this curious phenomenon; but, to Mrs. Vere, Toussaint's sable face was a most refreshing sight.

The elaborate "coiffure" was completed, and Toussaint enchanted with his "chef d'œuvre à la Vallière." Alice thought herself a rival to Miss Tillton; she did not question the style, it was the fashion, and that was enough.

Ah! ye modern belles, fresh from the last finished touch of Auguste Martel, who look down with contempt upon the antiquated superstructures of old Toussaint, remember, as the pioneer in a new and unexplored road to fame, he deserves your thanks; and there are many now living who can recall an incident of his early life, that elevates Toussaint in the respect of all who knew his history.

He was born in the island of Saint Domingo, a slave, upon the sugar estate of a Creole lady. At the time of the insurrection, he warned his mistress of her danger, and assisted in her escape from that terrible massacre. Secreted on board an American vessel, they set sail for New York, where the

lady landed without money and without friends; but Tous-saint's honest heart never swerved in its grateful attachment to one who had ever kindly fostered him in her better days; his strength, his energy, and his time were devoted to her relief. Patiently he toiled in a strange country to purchase comfort for his honored mistress.

His reward followed; he became the fashionable hair-dresser of the day; but greater than his popularity was the merit of those industrious exertions which contributed to the support of his aged mistress to the last hour of her earthly existence.

Like your grandmothers, gentle readers, do you not honor Toussaint?

The old man has long since retired from public life, and the evening of his days is passed, with his "good Juliette," under the shade of "his own vine and fig tree."

Whether it was the magical effect of that head "*à la Val-lière*," which acted too strongly upon the intoxicated senses of the Baron Von Whiskinheimer, I know not, but he was a victim to the tender passion. Alice was so surrounded at a large and fashionable party, that she forgot the Baron's existence, as he subsided into his usual quiet corner, by Mrs. Vere. The good lady was speaking of her return home, and the poor Baron seemed very sorrowful; he had a most fearful idea of those southern wilds, and thought it a sin to cage so bright a bird as Alice Vere in such secluded bowers.

The last evening of Alice's stay in New York had arrived,

she was full of regret at leaving, as she spoke of her distant home; and the good Baron looked sadly dejected, when a bright idea seemed to seize him, and his own timidity was overcome as he implored her not to bury herself in that dismal retreat; she had but to speak the word, and she should be the queen of bright and mirthful realms; whilst his strong hand would lead her lightly through life, and his love scatter only flowers in the path.

Alice turned her beaming face towards the excellent Baron, as she exclaimed, "What a great, kind heart! Ah! my dear Baron, I am too little to fill so vast a space; I could never imagine you in love, it seems something too sublime. You will soon forget I have taken wing, and should you ever follow us to those 'wilds' you fancy so impracticable, you will see what a bright nest I have in the old Oaks, and we will give you a welcome which will convince you that our friendship is as sincere as it is warm."

In the fulness of his heart the poor Baron confided his disappointment to Mrs. Vere, and the good lady's eyes filled, as she gave him her hand at parting.

Arthur Vere had decided to return home by sea, and tried to persuade his mother not to undertake that long and tedious land route, but the Major shook his head significantly at his son, warning him not to urge this point, for he was well aware of his lady's dislike to water carriage; there was no invention, no conveyance to be named in the same breath with her own coach, for safety and convenience.

During the Veres' visit to Philadelphia, Miss Menlove relaxed so much; as to throw open her doors to her friends, who made many agreeable acquaintances in this most rational and quakerly metropolis.

"The Beam" had carried Alice off to her own little Sanctum, and was ransacking her desk for a recent letter from her brother. A certain package lay carefully tied up with blue-ribbon—it was not in that, no, but it was found at last; and then she begged Alice just to read it, and see what a charming brother he was. Shaking her bright curls, she added, "I once imagined you a most cruel person; for when Ned left I thought him in a terrible state of mind, and almost cried my eyes out about his disappointment; but here he writes as cheerfully as ever, and speaks of you as calmly as a philosopher of eighty; I am sure you will rejoice in his recovery, even more than I do." She handed Alice the open letter, and stole to a window to watch for Jocelin; while her friend read thus.

"U. S. Frigate C——, August 10, 1810.

"Here we are in the Bay of Naples, dear Marion, and I could exclaim in the words of an old Neapolitan proverb, '*Vedi Napoli e poi mori*,' but that it seems to me it is the last wish or thought, after knowing anything so beautiful, to be satisfied to leave it hurriedly; or to dream of anything so solemn as dying. In Rome one can afford to be serious and thoughtful; but here Nature is too enchanting, everything

around you is too bright, not to make existence a delight; the poorest beggar laughs in the sunshine, and wears a happier face than many a more favored child of fortune in our own land. I strolled last evening along the Strada de Chiaja, a scene of ceaseless gaiety and animation; open carriages filled with beautiful women, whose dark eyes gleam like stars twinkling above you; the lower classes, in their gay dresses, devouring macaroni or iced watermelons, crowding eagerly around the venders of sorbetto and lemonade; their rapid gesticulation and loud vociferation mingling with the tinkling of guitars, and the reckless laughter of the lazzaroni.

“The luxurious breath of this soft clime, the resplendent skies reflected in the glorious bay, the enchanting views of land and sea, are enough to charm the veriest misanthrope into contentment with himself and all the world.

“Over this fair realm the handsome Murat holds sway, under the title of King Joachim. You know, he married Caroline Bonaparte, and some two years since Napoleon assigned to him the vacant throne of Naples.

“I have not yet visited the tomb of Virgil, or seen anything of the beautiful environs. Vesuvius is smoking away as calmly as if its slumbering embers were expiring in their sulphureous caverns.

“And now, my dear little sister, let me ask how you cajoled Aunt Miriam out of Fourth street, and spirited her away to the Springs? I think you must have bribed the

doctor to send her out of town; but you could always manage the old lady when the sight of my luckless face was so unwelcome a visitant, that it was only tolerated in the house, during my short holidays, because you loved it; and then, the blame of every broken window, of every accidental domestic calamity fell upon my head. Do you remember when tabby died, of sheer old age? Even her timely end was laid at my door. But, little as poor Aunt Miriam loved my graceless boyhood, I never bore her the less esteem and gratitude for all her devotion and fostering care of one I love far better than myself.

"I cannot fancy you beyond the dull walls of that sombre domicile, and I fear the influence of Aunt Miriam's moral disquisitions and strong philippics against mankind, will be greatly weakened.

"The Veres talk of passing the summer at Ballston Springs; so you may see Alice, and will understand how impossible it was to know and not love her. I often recall those beautiful, prayerful eyes of hers, and, even now, the memory of their gentle glance reflects its tranquil light upon my heart. She is associated with my far distant home, with you, my 'winsome darling,' and with all that is most holy and most sacred in thought, but not with the passionate love or wild emotion I had imagined as steadfast as my despair.

"Let me hear from you soon, and write me of your experiences in the gay world you have had an inkling of at last.

“Remember me most dutifully to Aunt Miriam, and that God may bless you, is the prayer of

“Your devoted Brother,

“EDWARD WALLACE.”

As Alice returned the letter, with a warm encomium upon its writer, the little “Beam” twined her arm lovingly around her, and tenderly she was folded to a heart that already cherished her as a sister in its affection. There was a well known footstep in the hall below; that bright face left its resting-place, and with a hasty glance at the mirror, away Marion bounded down the long stairway. Leaning upon its balustrade was a handsome youth glancing upwards at that fairy vision of light and beauty; and now the last step was gained, the little hand put back the dark locks from Jocelin’s brow, and the rosy lips gave their silent benediction as he stooped to receive the expected welcome.

Far above them, in the shadowy twilight, were prayerful, earnest eyes, looking down in overflowing tenderness upon that gentle greeting, and invoking peace for those untried hearts.

CHAPTER XII.

A BRILLIANT sunset was tinging the autumnal woods in all their variegated beauty, and glancing between the wide-spreading boughs of the old Oaks, when the great gate swung back upon its hinges and Tony cracked his whip exultingly, as the yellow coach, and its jaded horses, passed the long wished for portal.

Alice was already upon the portico, shaking hands with old Fortune and the delighted Lisette. As the Major gave his directions to Uncle Ned, who, once more in his element, made his admiring comments upon the new pair of northern horses, the carriage steps were unfolded, a lady's delicate foot was upon them, and the wayfaring silk bonnet soon followed, somewhat dusty and bruised, but stately still in its elevated expression, as its mistress was once more surrounded by the happy faces and warm welcome of her faithful domestics.

How charming their own home seemed to our weary travellers, and what a luxury a good bed is! Such a one as Mrs. Vere's, neither too hard nor too soft, but elastic, and suggestive of repose, in its fair linen and downy pillows, a regular

six-footer, with its tall mahogany posts and rich carving, surmounted by a set of chintz curtains, covered with blue and pink peacocks, perched upon trees, bearing simultaneously the most tempting fruits and flowers. How often, as a child, had Alice esteemed it a happy privilege to be allowed to sleep beneath those "peacock curtains," or, during some temporary indisposition, to while away the tedious hours in counting over the gay birds, until her little brain was puzzled by their endless number; and the splendid tail of one, just over her, seemed to open more widely, as she gazed fixedly at its bright plumage, until her weary eyes closed in sleep, and her peacocks became the mute sentinels of her slumbers. Refreshed by her tranquil rest, Alice was early awake, and in the pleasant garden, while the dew was still glittering upon the roses, and the blue eyes of the violets filled with its crystal drops.

The orange trees were laden with golden fruit, hanging in bright balls among the leaves; and there was the odorous popponax, with its feathery foliage, shrinking sensitively beneath your touch, its tiny blossoms filling the air with exquisite perfume. This delicate little mimosa, so peculiar to our Southern clime, is associated in my mind with the earliest memories of home; its sweet scented breath ever vividly recalls the picture of my little sisters, holding their pinafores to catch the airy treasure I gathered in handfuls from the thorny tree; showering the flowers, like gilded dust, upon their cherub faces, as often as I filled their aprons.

And when, at last, the yellow heaps were collected, we scampered off together, to pour the fragrant gift into our mother's lap. How softly her fair hand then rested upon our heads, as she gently murmured, "God bless my darlings!"

The home has passed to stranger hands, and the flowers are blooming on a mother's grave.

* * * * *

Mrs. Vere, in her green silk calèche, with the basket upon her arm, once more wended her way to the Settlement; the women presented Alice with dozens of eggs, and parched groundnuts, or "pindars," as they call them; simple tokens of grateful love to their young mistress.

The Major had gone to town for a few days, and returned rather depressed in spirits; the factor's books were sadly in advance, this Northern trip had swallowed up a whole crop at one gulp, and had given him a terrible fit of the blues; whilst his good lady declared that nothing would ever induce her to leave home again.

Lucy was with them for a few days, and as she wandered by the side of Alice, to their childish haunts, she seemed again a guileless, light-hearted girl; but those pleasant hours were fleeting fast. There was an arrival at The Oaks, the guest Mr. Adolphus Wilson, for the name of Pippas was expunged from the face of time. He had not grown into his new appellation, it hung loosely upon him still.

Mrs. Vere did not pretend to acknowledge any change,

and Alice, before welcoming him, softly repeated the name of Wilson. He advanced to offer his hand, she looked into the familiar face, when out popped the odious cognomen, after all; there was no use of mincing it, she might as well clap on the final "s," better than leave it poor, little, naked "Pipp," without its only redeeming point. Blushing and laughing at her own "gaucherie," the young lady was more successful in her next attempt; as Lucy Summers entered the room, the harmonious combination was music to her ear, and in her bright eye there was a gleam of triumph, as the tips of those delicate fingers were raised to the lips of her chosen lord.

It was a gloomy looking morning for a bridal day; heavy clouds, threatening rain, hung black and lowering above them, as the wedding guests were conveyed to the residence of Colonel Summers.

The long and narrow parlor was filled with ladies, ranged in chairs against the wall, while the men were grouped apart, when Mrs. Vere was ushered in by the Colonel, followed by the Major and his two sons. Alice had joined Lucy as bridesmaid; there was a slight stir among the visitors, their pastor had arrived, the door opened, and the Bride entered, robed in elegant simplicity, upon the arm of her gay groom.

The beautiful Ritual was distinctly and impressively read, the solemn vow enforced, but from Lucy there was no responsive sign; her drooping head was motionless, her lips

seemed turned to stone, and her hand trembled, as the marriage symbol rested upon her finger; the benediction was given, and they were pronounced man and wife.

From the further end of the room, Jocelin Vere had witnessed the ceremony. Once only he had caught a glimpse of those long fair curls, shading her brow and cheek; there was something appalling in the deadly pallor of that face, and he could not look again. But, amidst the buzz of many voices, and surrounded by her relatives, Lucy had not observed his presence; he had arrived only the day previous, and she believed him still absent.

He advanced to offer the usual congratulations, when her startled glance met his; a bright flush suffused her conscious brow, then quickly fled, as sinking into a chair, she whispered "Give me air, I'm stifling," and they bore her fainting from the spot.

After some gentle restorative, the bridal robe was exchanged, the handsome coach and four drew up in style, and the "happy pair" were whirled rapidly from the door.

The company had tasted the wedding cake and wine, and were repairing hurriedly to their homes, beneath the increasing gloom of a sullen sky. Alice sat silently by her mother's side, and Jocelin looked strangely troubled, as Mrs. Vere protested against fainting fits, a weakness she never had been guilty of in her whole life.

Our party were scarcely within their own hall, when the rain poured down in torrents, the winds were let loose, and

the great arms of the giant trees were tossed wildly upwards, with the long grey moss clinging to their boughs.

But the gust had now spent its fury, the storm was lulling fast, light clouds were scudding with the wind, and the sun set gloriously in the golden west.

As Alice stood in the softened light of that Autumn evening, looking at those gorgeous skies, why seemed the day so prophetic to her heart of Lucy's fate? The sun was sinking fast, but his last lingering ray smiled hopefully on Earth, giving promise of a brighter morrow.

CHAPTER XIII.

WRAPPED in her cashmere and with waving plumes, Lucy sat in her carriage with Alice by her side; she was full of animation, relating the different gossip of the day, not a vestige of care upon her brow, not a shadow of regret in her sparkling eyes; and Alice rejoiced in her friend's happiness as she laughed merrily at her graceful pleasantries.

* * * * *

Alone in a spacious apartment was a gentleman of slight proportions, dressed with elaborate care, his grey hair disposed of to the best advantage, and, with an expression of ineffable complacency, he smiled benignly upon himself and all the world.

The clock upon the mantel struck its tinkling chime, when dinner was announced with due precision, but those slowly pacing feet paused in their solitary walk; there was an anxious glance towards the timepiece, as the gentleman seated himself with heroic patience. Tick—tick—tick, repeated the ceaseless monitor, and the pumps and silk stockings twitched nervously upon the hearth-rug, when the sound of a light step floated upon his ear, and Lucy, radi-

ant in beauty, stood before him. But Mr. Adolphus Wilson was not to be soothed in his present perturbation of spirit; he elevated his eyebrows, and remarked with a preliminary cough, "that dinner had been kept waiting some fifteen minutes, and that he must beg leave to insist upon greater punctuality in the mistress of his establishment." With a faint laugh and a careless toss of her head, she exclaimed, "Insist! Mr. Wilson, that is a strong word surely; this tête-à-tête dinner is dull enough without adding to its ceremony a sermon upon punctuality."

They were seated at table, but their repast was soon dismissed in chilling silence, for Mr. Wilson had lost his appetite, and Lucy's curling lip disdained to heal the wound her words had inflicted.

How temptingly the ruby wine sparkled in his glass; how cheering its genial warmth, as it flowed freely from its crystal cell, and for whom? The temperate, cautious man, the excellent Adolphus Pippis. Ah! changed indeed in name and heart was the shadow of our friend.

The lady was in her luxurious drawing-room. This had not been the first discord marring the harmony of her married life, and alas! for that proud heart, there was no tremulous regret, no softening tear, nor aught in her estrangement that could sue for peace.

To those alone who love, is such contrition known, when the averted eye of affection no longer meets your pleading look, when the familiar step no longer seeks your favorite

haunts, and your life seems suddenly darkened, for you feel how desolate this world would be without the communion of that true heart which alone responds to yours. Then comes the gushing memory of many kindnesses, and all thought of pride is swept away as you deplore in faltering tones your hasty words or thoughtless act, and long before the quivering lip has ceased to speak, you are caught to that yearning breast, and your forgiveness sealed in sweet reconciliation, as you taste again the blessedness of confiding love.

The damask curtains were dropped, the candles lighted, and Lucy engrossed in a novel, when the sound of voices was followed by the entrance of Jocelin, Vere, and Howard. They were greeted with graceful ease, and how brilliant she was in her reckless mirth, how fascinating in her sparkling originality!

In addressing Jocelin, there was still a lingering reserve of manner which interested him unconsciously, and he went home to dream of—— his little Beam?

Ah! no, the spell of earlier days enthralled him, and those blue eyes were fading from his sight; but they seemed reproachful only in his sleep, and how can a man help his dreams?

* * * * *

Walter had returned, and as he ascended the steps of the Vere mansion, he paused for an instant ere he sought the welcome he so ardently had longed for. The grim knocker

was raised, and its sonorous echo answered by old Fortune, who stared vacantly at the visitor until he spoke; when those dim eyes were suddenly enlightened, and our traveler joyfully announced.

He was received by the Major and Mrs. Vere, with cordial affection; but Alice, whither had she flown? There were some flowers upon a table, with a book half closed, one he had given her in years gone by. The volume was in his hand, when a card fell from between the leaves; he merely glanced at it, but the name written there had conjured up some painful thought, which banished the smile from his lips, and declining Mrs. Vere's hospitality, he hurried back, alone, to his cheerless lodgings.

* * * * *

In the character of Walter's face there was strength and energy of will; he was not a man to be lightly won, or easily moved. Thrown at an early age upon his own resources, the boy had fought his way bravely on—through many trials and great temptations; his serious and earnest mind had ever rejected the false, and seized with avidity the true. Singularly isolated in his social position, he shrank from intimate communion with the many, but in that firm and constant heart, the few he valued were cherished with a devotion as true as unshaken. His love for Alice Vere was among the earliest and most sacred of these impressions, but

it was of a nature too exalted and too unselfish to have exacted from her guileless affection, any promise of its constancy; she was too innocent and childlike then to comprehend this ardent emotion, or to receive so great a trust. He had left her untrammelled by any vow, and her destiny would be the accomplishment of her own choice.

In distant lands, syren voices and seductive glances fell powerless around him. He had not even dreamed of temptation, when an accidental circumstance revealed to him the love of one as virtuous as she was beautiful; how gently, how delicately he discouraged this preference; how frankly he confided to her his attachment to another, and won the sympathy of that fair friend, and her kindly interest, without wounding her self-esteem, or betraying his knowledge of her secret.

Years passed, and he returned to the home of his boyhood; there were busy tongues who confidently asserted Alice's engagement to an Englishman of rank and fortune, and that the marriage was to take place in the spring; every one said the affair was settled, and it must be so.

————— Sad and faint grew the heart of Walter Gray, as he mused over his own solitary fate, with the hope he had so long clung to thus early blighted. And yet he could not blame her, nor did the thought of his more favored rival call up feelings of enmity or unkindness. He had seen his name placed within the pages of Alice's book, and

he could fancy how her eye had rested upon it, as she traced in hopeful characters her own bright fate.

————— In her riding-dress, at the end of the hall, stood a fair equestrian; Arthur hastened towards her, his countenance glowing with delight, as he gaily asked, "Who do you think has come?" A mingled look of hope and doubt passed over his sister's face, but the mystery was soon solved, for he quickly added, "one whose name you have forbidden me to mention." He felt the pressure of her hand upon his arm, as in a low voice she murmured, "Tell me, Arthur, is he here?" and the color returned to her cheek, when she heard that Walter had been to the house, but had left it a short time since.

How strange that he did not wait! In old times he would have lingered for hours just to catch a glimpse of her fitting form. Then came the chilling thought of his indifference, and the little head was thrown proudly back, the gathering tears repressed. * * * *

Through the brilliant apartments of a stately dwelling glided a graceful figure; sweeping folds of soft satin fell around her beautiful person, and a diamond tiara glittered on her brow.

Guests were fast assembling, and Lucy Wilson was queen of that festive hall.

Alice entered with her brothers; what refinement of loveliness, what unsullied purity in her whole expression!

Surrounded by many claimants for her smiles, she treated with winning kindness the most humble and retiring. Even the blushing Digby recovered his self-possession, as she congratulated him upon his recent marriage with the younger Miss Liston.

Alice had declined dancing, when a gentleman was presented to her as Captain Rosling, of the army. His advances were coldly met, but his familiar manner and cool assurance were not easily discouraged, and he was still whispering some trivial nonsense in her ear, when her head was impatiently raised, and in a mirror directly opposite she beheld the face of Walter Gray. His tall form, and the aristocratic beauty of his features, made him conspicuous among many.

Leaning against a marble pedestal, with her long dark lashes almost resting upon her cheek, stood Alice Vere. A step approached, when her eyes were slowly lifted, and her hand extended in silent greeting to her friend.

There was sadness in the tone of Walter's voice, and it faltered slightly as he spoke her name, for his heart was full of those early memories, and she was lovelier than even his fondest imagining had pictured her.

They had wandered to another room, away from the dancing and the crowd, when half reproachfully he asked, "Am I so great a stranger, Alice, that you welcome me thus coldly? Tell me, truly, if this little hand were ungloved, should I see my parting gift upon your finger, or has it

been cast aside with childish thoughts, and the associations of those young days?"

There was a moment's silence, and then, in trembling accents, she replied, "Your ring is not upon my finger, Walter, but do not ask me why."

Gazing earnestly upon her blushing face, he exclaimed, "It was, indeed, an idle question, for I had no claim to be remembered; but, in this world, we are selfish, even in our best affections. I must learn now to think only of your happiness; that I have no part in it is my own sorrow, and its shadow must not fall upon your path."

The company were thronging gaily past them on their way to supper; his arm was offered, and she was grateful for its support, for that long and brilliantly lighted stairway seemed floating from beneath her feet. She was soon conscious of hearing the hum of many voices, and when that strange faintness had passed, she looked around for Walter, but Captain Rosling was smiling in his place, jestingly inquiring if the tall knight who had carried her off so boldly had been vanquished, adding, that he only hoped his banishment was for life. She did not condescend to notice either the gentleman or his speech, when Arthur whispered, "Alice, you look tired; had you not better go?"

How gladly she sank into a corner of the old coach, whilst her brother was too considerate to question her silence.

They were soon at home, and in her own room, pacing its dim length, was our gentle heroine. Speaking to herself,

as if in sleep, she slowly asked, "What does this mean? Why does he tell me that he can have no part in my happiness? Why does he look so mournfully upon me, or speak of his sorrow as something I may not share? Oh! Walter, you know not the heart whose sympathy you reject; and yet I am too proud to regret his affection or to seek the confidence he withholds."

————— Oh! blessed sleep, to the vexed heart and weary frame how sweet thy mystic spell! On noiseless wing thou visitest the couch of all humanity, and the crowned head in its gilded royalty cannot purchase greater luxury.

Most merciful art thou to the poor and sorrowing among the children of men. But, for those long tried by physical pain or mental anguish, O gentle spirit! close the aching lids and soothe the fevered brain, until they, too, forget in peaceful slumber their suffering and their woe!

CHAPTER XIV.

AT a dinner given by the Veres, in compliment to Walter, he was placed upon the right of the lady of the house, and as Gray's deferential manner was even more marked to elderly women than to the young and beautiful, this simple kindness won for him golden opinions; whilst his varied knowledge and solid acquirements gave to his conversation that elevated tone which addressed itself at once to the higher feelings and enchained the attention, without argumentative display or the arrogant assumption of intellectual superiority.

It was late in the evening when the gentlemen left the table; but Walter had made his escape among the first, and was seated with Alice, talking of Lucy Wilson. He had expressed his disappointment in her marriage and his disapprobation of her present levity, when Alice pleaded, in extenuation, her friend's youth and beauty, and the great disparity in Mr. Wilson's age; "Besides," she added, more warmly, "if ill-natured people choose to comment upon her words and actions, she is too independent to care for their praise or censure."

"Ah!" replied Walter, "men only can thus defy public

opinion : in the code of this world's morality, they need not stop to wipe off the stains with scrupulous nicety, from the surface of their character, but dash along with a bold front, and never mind the rust, so it tarnish not the honor of a gentleman, whilst womanly purity must be sheathed with greater caution ; let but a spot rest on her fair fame, however unjustly, and, like the crimson dye upon the key, in the old fairy tale, it will only glow the brighter with every effort to efface it."

"Yes," exclaimed his companion, "and there are tyrannical bluebeard , murderous in intention and unrelenting in heart, who triumph in the evidence of her frailty, or deny to suspected innocence the scant covering of their boasted charity."

Never had Alice appeared more beautiful than as the earnest champion of her sex. As Walter rose to take leave, he exclaimed, with playful emphasis, "If mercy were represented always thus temptingly, there would be no need of judgment or law upon earth."

He had gone, and we will not follow him to his solitary room, but visit the rich man's chamber, where in an arm-chair, by the fire, was the recumbent figure of Mr. Wilson, suffering from an attack of the gout, which, like the Pipp's diamond, was an heirloom in the family. His face was contracted by pain, and with temper somewhat discomposed, he declined impatiently the assistance of his servant in the usual nocturnal preparations.

The assiduous valet moved with noiseless tread about the

room, whilst his master's eyes were fixed upon the glowing embers, as if he were building some brilliant castle, not in the air, but in the flickering blaze or bright coals upon the hearth. The burning log had fallen apart, throwing up a shower of sparks, and in the crumbling fragments he traced the outlines of a familiar face. How fancy brightened as he gazed! There was some pleasant association with that grotesque head, crowned with the high top comb of the long forgotten Sophia Murrel! But the image was fading fast, the lofty head was veiled in ashen whiteness, and as the gentleman sank back upon his cushions, a deep sigh burst from his heaving breast.

Hark! what a merry laugh, how musically it rang through the quiet domicile; but upon the sick man's ear that joyous peal fell painfully. He caught the sound of light footsteps, and, as they passed his door, a sudden movement of his imprisoned limbs was followed by a sharp twinge, and his tortured frame writhed in agony.

We will not linger by his couch, for mirthful voices woo us to lighter thoughts, as we join a small party at the supper table, where Lucy presided, with enchanting grace. Among her guests there was Mrs. Fairly, a bold, dashing woman, giving her opinions freely, unburdened by any scrupulous refinement or puling sensibility; whilst her husband, a pale, meek man, listened habitually to her emphatic conversation without presuming to offer a dissenting word.

Poor Tom ! most unobtrusive and resigned of mortals, your patient soul never questioned the despotic rights of Mrs. Fairly.

Captain Rosling was an attaché of the lady's; he drove Tom's horses, smoked Tom's cigars, and in the evening took Madame to the play or a crowded rout, to the inexpressible relief of her unsophisticated husband.

Late the party tarried, whilst the generous wines and the ready wit flashed brightly ; but the table was deserted now, the revellers were gone, yet lingering last of all was Jocelin Vere. Lucy was in the gallery leading to the drawing-room. She moved thoughtfully on, plucking the leaves from her bouquet, and treading upon the rosy petals as they fell. Soon a firm step kept pace with hers, and a low voice sued for the flowers in her hand. Lifting her large bright eyes, she said, "You wonder how I can destroy anything so beautiful ; flowers speak to you of love and hope, of freshness and purity ; they are full of revealings to the loved and happy, they are angelic messengers to the innocent and true, but to me they are cold and silent ; I cannot read their poesy, and my heart is untouched by their sweet influences."

Jocelin eagerly exclaimed, "They do indeed speak to me of love, and of one lovelier than earth's fairest flowers, of one whom I can only associate with all that is beautiful and bright."

Standing silently before her, with the light of that passionate love kindling in his eye, one glance told her all. With

her face bowed upon her hands, Lucy sank into a seat as he whispered, "Will you not confide in me, cannot we love as in those early days, and be as happy, as innocent as then?"

Hurriedly she answered, "Never, Jocelin, you deceive yourself; in pity leave me now!"

His arm encircled her drooping form, his breath was upon her cheek—it was but for a moment, and his retreating step died in the distance.

Gliding to her chamber, the key was quickly turned within the lock; then, with clasped hands and wildly beaming eyes, she murmured, "He loves me! this is happiness indeed!"

Every feature was illumined with joy, and her whole frame trembled with emotion, as the rapturous thought glowed within her heart.

Why recoiled that form, as if some evil threatened its bright life? The cup of bliss was lifted to her lips, its nectared drops were honied sweet, but a secret voice warned her of the poisoned chalice. She shrank affrighted as her own heart repeated, "What hast thou to do with love!"

The gray light of early dawn streamed through that curtained room, its inmate slept, and we will draw the silken folds around the lady's couch, and leave her to her dreams.

CHAPTER XV.

To Jocelyn Vere the morning broke dimly. His first awakening thoughts were painfully confused, but suddenly the truth flashed upon his mind. Under the excitement of undue conviviality, he had betrayed the senseless passion he had so firmly resolved to conquer. The image of his little Marion, with the recollection of her confiding love, rose reproachfully before him. Her last letter had been left too long unanswered. She did not blame him when, in return for her long pages, he had written only a few hurried lines, but chided him, in her childlike way, for being a sad lazy boy, and that she should punish him some day for having teased her so. He read those simple, touching words again. How could he answer them now, with deceit and falsehood? Had he not wronged her young and trusting heart? He would write at once, confess his fault, and absolve her from her vow; but how sad thus to blight her joyous existence, for he knew how closely this affection was entwined with the delicate fibres of her life, and he could not snap, with reckless hand, the tie which bound her to him so tenderly. No; things must take their course. He would avoid temptation

for the future, and leave for The Oaks. There was an engagement to-day, but nothing should detain him to-morrow.

At an earlier hour than usual, Captain Rosling made his appearance at Mrs. Fairly's. He was in high spirits, full of a delightful bit of gossip, which he hinted at vaguely, but after some persuasion was induced to reveal, as he said, rather mysteriously. "Late last night, I was returning to my lodgings, having first seen your ladyship home, when I passed the Wilsons' door, and at the foot of the steps met a gentleman, with his hat slouched over his eyes, who brushed past me so hastily that he nearly pushed me off the side-walk. At a glance I recognised in the gay Lothario, Jocelin Vere."

"Ho! ho!" exclaimed his eager listener, "this is the immaculate Mrs. Wilson. So the wind sets that way, does it?" Arranging the folds of her shawl, she was soon equipped for a walk, laughing long and loudly as the Captain recommended silence upon the subject for the present.

But the lady had an intimate friend, it was no harm to tell it in strict confidence to her. Indignantly she summed up the atrocious revelation, adding, "And this is the end of all her high notions, holding her head above every one else; whilst her poor old gouty husband is shut up in his room, she spends his money bravely, and entertains the men at her elegant establishment. Think of my being so imposed upon! I can't believe it yet, and shall suppose the Captain mistaken, unless I have further proof."

"My dear," interposed her worthy coadjutor, "what further proof can you require—a man seen coming stealthily out of her house at such an hour! and when every one knows that her husband and herself quarrel like cat and dog."

"Well," rejoined Mrs. Fairly, "I am engaged to go to the play with her to-night, and shall judge for myself. She can't deceive me, now that my eyes are opened." Thus parted these amiable associates, and thanks to their benevolent efforts the affair did not stagnate.—

And our young philosopher who had reasoned so sternly, with his head resting comfortably upon his pillow, at morn, where shall we find him, now that night closes upon the busy world?

Strolling carelessly along the principal thoroughfare to the theatre. Lucy would be there, but he need not seek her box.

———— She was late that night. How pale and silent she was, with her bright eyes wandering restlessly over the house. As Jocelin came forward a glance of tender reproach met his, he could not resist it; in another moment Mrs. Fairly made room for him to pass, and his prudent resolutions were forgotten.

At the conclusion of the play, whilst Howard was looking for her carriage, Lucy leant upon the arm of Jocelin Vere; placing a note in his hand, she whispered, "Read this and grant all I ask." The billet was cautiously received, but not

before the keen eyes of Mrs. Fairly had observed, with malicious triumph, the secret missive.

Jealous of Lucy's superior attractions, and of her position in society, beneath the profession of sincere friendship she had eagerly watched for some imprudence on the part of her fair friend, but hitherto she could recall no look or word which her own evil mind could warp into a suspicion of blame.

* * * * *

Upon the page of Lucy's letter there were tears, such tears as only the impulsive, passionate heart of youth can understand.

"I do not reproach you, Jocelin, for your thoughtless words, words that are fraught with danger to us both. I only know that the love you have breathed would plant within my soul the sting of undying remorse. I only feel we must not meet again. Leave me, then, while I still have strength and courage to bid you go. Return to that guileless one whose innocent love will lead you to wiser thoughts, seek in her purity and truth your surest safety.

"I am too proud to envy the happiness you have bestowed upon another, and no act or word of mine shall disturb her peace.

"Then, farewell, Jocelin; think of me only as the world deems me, cold and vain and heartless, but not as I might have been, not as you have last known me. And when we

look back through the fading light of time, to this early affection, when the noon-tide heat, the battle and the strife are over, may it still be to us a green spot in our earthly pilgrimage, where memory will delight to linger, for no accusing thought shall rob us of its enchantment, and no reproach will rest upon the name of

“LUCY.”

Woe to the heart which cherishes a love that virtue and honor forbid! What wild hopes, what struggles, and what tears are born of such a passion; even if there is no actual guilt to be atoned for by years of penitence and remorse.

And has the world grown wiser or better within the past half century?

Look at the shifting scenes in the great panorama of life; see our crowded cities, there you can solve the problem for yourself, in the higher circles of society. Nay, you need not stand on tiptoe to catch a glimpse of them; they are not so high as you imagine.

You knew that lady, once a portionless girl, before her pretty face had captivated the heart of a wealthy merchant. A few months since she was a blushing, timid bride, but her fashionable education is now completed. She has her box at the opera, drives the handsomest carriage in town, and dresses to perfection.

It is such shocking taste to be seen for ever with one's hus-

band, to receive any attentions from him in public, she need not trouble herself to look bewitching for him; he never notices her dress, he never says she is divine.

But young A—— is so stylish, so “*comme il faut*,” so thoughtful of her wishes! In his white kids and that unexceptionable tie, he is just the appendage necessary.

Mr. T—— dines at the Club, and comes home too tired to enjoy anything; the poor man is so fond of making money and his wife of spending it, both charming qualities in their way.

It is terribly dull for this fair creature to pass a quiet evening at home; she does not believe in the fabulous enjoyments of her own fireside.

The husband returns, wearied and harassed by the cares of the day, to find the room vacant, and his wife dressing for a fashionable party.

This is all very elegant, very innocent no doubt; but look closer at these dressed-up modern dolls. After all, they are only poor imitations of *La Parisienne*; and like all things wanting originality, they are not pleasing.

Are these the women America has gloried in, as the nursing mothers of her Statesmen and heroes? Nay, her hardy enterprising sons never sprang from so feeble a stock, nor shall we find the mother of a Washington among such vapid, flimsy beings as these.

We will put aside the absurdity of aping bad French manners, and view the matter more seriously still; as we recall

many a sad story of broken hearts and ruined peace, to be traced alone to a vanity and frivolity, which the customs of our country can never sanction.

And how can this state of things be remedied? By the earnest efforts of every true daughter of America, who in her own intrinsic virtue can elevate the tone of society, and purify by her presence the moral atmosphere around her.

By the bright example of those matronly wives, who in their own homes can rear up children in pride and honor, seeking in so blessed a privilege their surest happiness, adorning themselves in all loveliness and gentleness of spirit, making their dwellings places of light and hope, of confidence and repose to sinful man.

Oh! woman, how wide your sway; you hold the secret lever in your delicate hands, to move all this breathing mass; then use your power to lift us nearer Heaven!

CHAPTER XVI.

THE pattering rain of a gloomy March day fell steadily against the casement, as Alice resigned herself philosophically to a quiet morning at home. Drawing her chair closer to the fire, she turned over the leaves of a book, but those beautiful eyes were full of dreamy thought, and the volume soon dropped from her hand; both mind and heart were weaving a fairy web, and lighter than gossamer was the fabric spun.

Degenerate child of one who never wearied in her ceaseless industry, at whose quick step the household keys jingled pleasantly, polished clues to numberless receptacles of provident care and marvellous neatness. From that ample girdle hung the peaceful implements of her morning's work; the scissors in its silvered sheath, and silken cushion stored with pins.

To the dames who wore them they were indeed a charm against a host of ills; a perfect panacea for headache or ennui. But, to our city belles such amulets are vain; they are too learned to wield a needle! and in this age of intellectual improvement, they look back upon the literary

attainments of their "poor dear grandmammias," with sovereign contempt.

But we have wandered from thy side, Alice Vere, and when bachelors, in their prosaic life, can dream so charmingly as "Ike Marvel," what must have been thy reveries, fair girl!

Those gentle thoughts were still veiled in mystery, when the door of the drawing-room was thrown open, and a visitor announced.

Alice started from her seat, and exclaimed, "Who ever dreamt of seeing any one in such weather!" The words were scarcely spoken when Reginald Langdon stood before her, gaily adding, "and much less did you imagine I should be the intruder." It was impossible not to welcome kindly such a face as his, cheering as the sunshine after a gloomy day. Alice revived beneath the inspiring light of those clear blue eyes; her languor and indifference vanished, and her sweet voice spoke its greeting so kindly that Langdon's heart rejoiced, whilst his ear drank in the music of her words. Had Walter been present he might have contrasted this joyous welcome with his own return. There was no trembling hand, no tearful eye, no chilling silence now; all was mirth and gladness, and yet tears are often truer than smiles, and silence more eloquent than speech.

But no such bright augury enlivened the vigil of Walter Gray, beside the death-bed of the man who had injured him most in life.

Herman Norman had been appointed guardian to young Gray, being his nearest relative, but he had neglected the sacred charge of his dying sister. The orphan boy was placed at a distant school, and his uncle showed little interest or concern in him, until the period at which he was first presented to the reader, when suddenly awaking to the recollection of his charge, he proposed Walter's travelling abroad for several years.

During this absence Gray became of age, and on taking possession of his father's estate, on his return, he found it encumbered by debt, and his affairs much embarrassed.

It was in the midst of such anxieties, and with some strong misgivings as to the fidelity of his guardian's administration, that he received a few hurried lines from Mrs. Norman, requesting his immediate presence at Longwood.

The summons was answered without delay, and as Walter entered that gloomy chamber, the dying man fixed his piercing eyes upon him, and motioned to his wife to withdraw. Then, raising himself slowly upon his pillows, he exclaimed, in a hollow voice, "Walter, I have wronged you—I have robbed the orphan of his inheritance! At first, I persuaded myself that I was only borrowing money you did not want, and which could easily be replaced, but my affairs became gradually more involved, and I have never been able to restore the amount due to your estate; the pale face of your mother has haunted me day and night, and her last words are ever sounding in my ears. I have made, now, the resti-

tution both honor and justice demand, and that deed will secure to you all I owe."

Walter received it in silence, and saw, at a glance, that by this act Mrs. Norman and her children would be left penniless.

Following the generous impulse of his heart, he hastily destroyed the paper, saying :

"I cannot, my dear sir, permit your wife and children to suffer ; consider the debt as already cancelled."

The revulsion of feeling was too strong for that exhausted frame. Whilst his hand still remained clasped in Walter's, the head fell back upon the pillow : his sorrowing wife returned to his side. There were no words to answer that fond look now, but the smile upon those silent lips was so peaceful that she wondered if death were not indeed more blessed to him than life.

CHAPTER XVII.

A LARGE party were assembled at a dinner given by the members of the Jockey Club. The wine had circulated freely, and song after song had followed, with uproarious chorus, the different toasts.

Captain Rosling was unusually loquacious, and upon some one present remarking Jocelin Vere's absence, he jocosely observed, "that the old people," as he styled the Major and Mrs. Vere, "had sent the pretty boy out of town, for that a certain fair lady had decoyed him from the path of duty." This was said with a most knowing wink, and upon his strictures becoming louder and more unguarded, Howard's ear was arrested by the sound of Lucy Wilson's name coupled with an epithet that sent the blood to his cheek with an indignant flush.

Fixing his eye upon the Captain, he leant forward from the opposite end of the table, and said, aloud, "The gentleman who has so basely slandered a lady, whose name I will not here repeat, would possibly have been more guarded in his expressions had the one whose honor he has implicated been present. I beg leave, therefore, to remind him that in

the absence of my friend, I must hold him responsible for his words."

Rosling quailed beneath the glance, but recovered himself instantly, and replied,

"Since the gentleman seems so anxious to defend the honor of his friend, I shall be most happy to give him every opportunity of proving his sincerity."

There was an evident anxiety, on the part of all present, to dispel the uncomfortable feeling which followed this altercation, but conversation flagged, and the party soon after broke up.

Captain Rosling was sipping his coffee very leisurely at breakfast, the next morning, when a note was handed him.

It was from Howard, in these words :—

"SIR,—In recalling the language you made use of last night, I feel compelled to demand a public retraction of every statement you then made, injurious to the honor of the parties concerned.

"Your obedient servant,

"F. HOWARD."

With a scornful smile the Captain drew pen and paper before him, and wrote thus :—

"SIR,—I am not in the habit of retracting any statement I have made, especially when I believe it to be the truth ;

it is, therefore, impossible for me to comply with your demand.

“Your obedient servant,

“WILLIAM ROSLING.”

Howard was seated with his eyes closed, and his head thrown listlessly back in his chair. He had been unusually silent and thoughtful all that evening; and yet he was not alone, for directly opposite was an elderly lady, dressed in deep mourning, whose soft eyes were turned lovingly towards him, as she rose at her usual hour for retiring. Stepping forward, she placed her hand upon his brow, and gently whispered, “Good night, my son.”

Howard started up, and reverently pressed his lips upon her pale thin cheek.

As she left the apartment, that tender “good night” seemed to echo reproachfully in his ear, and his strong heart was awed as he felt that the kiss might be his last. He dared not trust himself to think of her grief then, and shaking off the superstitious feeling which oppressed him, he was soon busily engaged in sorting and arranging his papers.

The last package was sealed as Langdon entered the room. He looked wearied and dispirited, for his efforts throughout the day had failed to settle amicably the affair between Howard and Captain Rosling; and he had merely come now to acquaint Howard with the final arrangements for to-morrow’s meeting.

———— Near a shady spring, overhung by the drooping boughs of a large elm, stood three figures facing a narrow by-path, leading to the open field before them.

Foremost of the group was Reginald Langdon. A vague presentiment of evil oppressed him, and as he turned from Howard's calm, unclouded eye, the sound of approaching wheels reached his ear.

The sun was just gilding the forest pines, and the birds singing their matin songs, as Captain Rosling hurried towards the appointed spot.

His second held a brief conference with Langdon, and the preliminaries were speedily arranged.

The principals were now placed—there was a moment's pause, as Howard stood calmly confronting his adversary, when the fatal word was given, and both pistols were discharged almost at the same instant.

Langdon saw Howard stagger a few paces, and then fall; he rushed forward, and kneeling by the surgeon's side, supported the head of his unconscious friend, during the examination of the wound.

Captain Rosling had received but a trifling injury, and his second now approached with some expressions of regret that the affair had terminated so seriously. But as the surgeon succeeded in staunching the flow of blood, Howard slowly revived, when he was lifted into his carriage, and the parties left the ground.

Custom widely sanctioned then the practice of duelling, and society believed it the only security for personal honor; but in this more enlightened age men do not resort to bloodshed to settle every trifling difference. In these Christian times we cannot look upon the hand red with a brother's blood, and place the successful duellist above the poor misguided wretch, who, goaded by want or dire distress, is tempted to the committal of a crime abhorrent to nature.

For what constituted this man a murderer?—the wilful act which has destroyed the life of another. And because in the face of day, in the presence of witnesses, two human beings have met for the same deadly purpose, is their sin less in the sight of that Righteous Judge, who hath declared that “whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer?”

Ask the victor, when his foe lies bleeding at his feet, when the heart, a moment since beating quick and warm, is stilled for ever, if the curse of Cain does not seem to cleave unto him, and conscience whisper, “the voice of thy brother's blood crieth from the ground.”

Night was closing in as Jocelin Vere rode rapidly through the town and reined up at Howard's door. He had received a few hurried lines from Arthur, informing him of the duel and its result, and it was with an anxious heart and faltering step that he now entered that silent house.

In the drawing-room were several gentlemen conversing in a low voice. As Jocelin approached, Langdon left the

group, and, in answer to his breathless inquiry as to the extent of Howard's injury, he replied, that the surgeons had not been able to extract the ball, and although the wound was a very serious one, they had not yet pronounced the case hopeless.

Jocelin turned aside to hide his emotion, and, after a few moments, passed with Langdon into Howard's room, where it was arranged that they should watch alternately during the night.

Day succeeded night, and still within that darkened chamber moved noiseless feet, and there were whispered words, and anxious hearts around that couch of pain.

Again a widowed mother laid her hand upon that fevered brow, but the poor sufferer felt not its blessed touch nor knew the loving eyes bent tearfully upon him.

The faint light of a taper fell upon the face of Jocelin Vere, as he watched by the bedside of his friend.

Howard had slept calmly for several hours, and much was hoped from this deep repose; when there was a murmur, so low, that Jocelin's heart stood still; as he drew the curtain aside, Howard's eyes were open, and a smile of recognition passed over his face.

"Thank God!" whispered Jocelin, when his hand was feebly pressed, and reason again dawned upon that bewildered brain.

But vain was that fleeting hope, the watchfulness of loving friends, the yearning prayer of a mother's heart. Howard's

doom was sealed, and no human hand could avert it now. Gathered around that couch were the few who had known and loved him best. He was sinking rapidly; still his lips moved as if in prayer, when he breathed aloud the word "Contrition." Again he repeated it more slowly, and with one convulsive sigh the spirit passed away.

There were tears upon the averted face of Jocelin Vere, and stout hearts were moved as they remembered Howard in his generous and chivalric nature; for even the most careless must be awe-struck when the light of a joyous spirit is thus suddenly darkened.

All that remained of the young and gallant Howard had been consigned to the grave, when within the quiet churchyard glided a figure closely veiled, and Lucy knelt by that newly raised mound and placed flowers upon the grave.

Reader, I visited that spot a few months later, the myrtle and the rose flourished around it, and another mound was sheltered by those green branches. The broken-hearted mother had found rest beside her son.

CHAPTER XVIII.

APRIL was still chary of its sunshine in the streets of Philadelphia, and the leafless trees spread out their bare limbs like ragged beggars, craving the bounty of the coming seasons.

But how great the heart of nature, how warm, how vivifying its silent charities, how rapidly the naked hills are clothed in verdure, how soon almost magically those weird branches put forth new shoots and bursting buds, until the whole earth seems to laugh and sing with gladness.

In the sombre domicile of Miss Menlove no such genial influence had warmed its gentle inmates into life. It had been a long, dull winter even for the little "Beam;" her step seemed light as ever, but the sunshine was not in her smile, and that sweet face, with its floating curls and blue eyes, was softened into a pale starlight beauty, that was too solemn and too still for Marion. And the cloud gathered again upon the brow of Aunt Miriam—she was sure a man was the author of all this mischief. Bravely the little "Beam" struggled to hide from every eye her secret sorrow, but Jocelin's irregular and unsatisfactory letters had pained her more than she herself was willing to allow. Still she resolved to conceal

this from her aunt, until an officious friend opened that lady's eyes to the state of affairs, assuring her that she had heard, from good authority, that Jocelin Vere was desperately in love with another lady.

When Miss Menlove first broached this subject to her little niece, Marion heard her in silence and with many tears; but when urged to write to Jocelin, and break off all further intercourse with him, that weak heart grew strong, the little Beam wavered not, and the steadfast light of her own true nature shone out, as she exclaimed—

“Nay, I cannot doubt him; I will not nourish this evil suspicion, for when I cease to trust I shall no longer love.”

The cloud still looked threatening, and Marion longed for the spring. “Anything,” she sighed, “but this cold, cheerless snow, it makes me think of death.”

The winter was gone at last; the sunshine and flowers again smiled upon the earth, but Marion lay pale and languid on her couch, her gentle eyes gazing through the open window, into the deep blue ether beyond.

Aunt Miriam sat alone in her well-swept parlor, and the cloud grew darker upon her brow, as she prepared herself to meet Jocelin Vere with lowering displeasure, when her notable hand-maid, Biddy, intimated that a lady wished to speak with “the mistress.”

The visitor was admitted, and as Miss Menlove leisurely surveyed a tall figure robed in black, the deep veil was put

aside, and revealed the care-worn, altered face of her once beautiful rival, the wife of one whose early inconstancy had steeped in wormwood a heart formed for tender sympathy.

But the widow's sombre garb told its own tale of sorrow, and Miss Menlove removed her spectacles, to wipe the moisture from the glasses, as her visitor spoke. It was a common story, one we hear every day, of bereavement and death, of poverty and trial : a desolate woman, tenderly and delicately bred, left to struggle with stern necessity. But that fainting spirit had been roused to exertion by the strong instinct of maternal love. Pride was conquered, and humbly she now solicited the patronage of those who had known her in better days.

Miss Menlove not only promised efficient aid, but her whole face seemed glorified as she tied on an antiquated silk bonnet, and emerged from her dwelling by the side of her sorrow-stricken companion.

When the first rays of the rising sun fell upon the statue of Memnon, no greater miracle was wrought than the phenomenon of a cold and silent heart thus suddenly warmed into fervid life by the glowing charity of Christian love.

Again Biddy was summoned to the street door, and upon opening it, summarily announced that "the mistress" was out. She seemed unwilling to hold further parley with the enemy, when a gentleman hastily brushed past her, and Jocelin Vere stood within the fortress.

Through the quiet house floated a sound that filled the

fluttering heart of Marion with joy. She slipped from her couch, and stole softly to the staircase, peeping over into the hall below. Yes, it was his voice, asking for her. How could she resist it? Her foot was scarcely upon the first step, when Jocelin's dark eyes and manly face looked up eagerly, as if seeking some bright messenger from a better world.

One glance at the angelic apparition, so ethereal, so fragile in its beauty, that he trembled for its reality, and the little Beam was borne tenderly in his arms down the long stairway, and placed upon a sofa in the drawing-room. She was faint and weak, and as he knelt by her, chafing the little hand in his, a smile played around the pretty mouth, but the laughing dimples were gone, and in their place were tears, falling, from the soft lashes, upon her cheek.

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As Miss Menlove returned to her own mansion, she wondered who could have opened the long-deserted drawing-room, for Marion had not entered it, even to touch the old harpsichord, for months. The good lady was not one who demurred long upon any subject, so she marched boldly into the room, and suddenly confronted Jocelin Vere. The dim shadow of a wrathful frown gathered upon her brow, but Marion sprang lightly towards her, and drawing the old bonnet down until her own fair head was lost behind its ample crown, she whispered, "Dear Aunt Miriam! forgive him for my sake; he has done nothing so very wrong."

The bonnet wavered and swerved like a rusty weather-cock in a gale, when the wind shifted to the right quarter, the clouds were swept away, and the face of Miriam cleared up like a summer sky in June.

Far away in a distant land is a stranger grave, and buried with that sleeping dust was Miriam Menlove's bitter enmity to man.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE old Oaks were crowned with vernal beauty, and the sweeping moss hung glittering with dew from overarching boughs, beneath whose shade a merry party were dispersed. Gay voices echoed through the avenue, and fairy footsteps were returning from the garden as breakfast was announced.

Mrs. Vere, in her snowy cap, was already seated at the table, where her youthful guests were soon collected. The post-bag had been duly opened, and as Langdon received his despatches from the Major's hand, he glanced nervously at the superscription of his different letters, for the increasing difficulties and misunderstanding between England and America, threatened a renewal of hostilities, and furnished Langdon's friends at home with strong arguments for urging his return. He became silent and abstracted, and Alice's eyes were fixed upon him with such earnest, but unconscious interest, that when Walter Gray addressed her a casual remark, she started, and her blushes deepened as she saw the sarcastic smile upon his face.

There was a very perceptible frown upon the brow of

Alice Vere, and those gentle eyes flashed scornfully on Walter, as she rose from her seat.

Now, the heroine of our story is no ideal being, but a living, breathing woman, and we must confess that to us a belle of no metal is almost as senseless as a bell without a tongue.

Several plans had been discussed for the morning's amusement, and Langdon, who had recovered from the stupifying effects of a very long epistle, was eagerly soliciting the pleasure of a ride with Miss Vere. She did not accede to his request, and when he urged it more warmly, declined upon the plea that the indisposition of one of her fair guests would detain her at home. We know not whether it was purely accidental, but when Alice crossed the hall, a moment later, Walter was standing there alone. She would have passed him hurriedly, but he playfully prevented this, and, as he held both hands reluctant prisoners, looked into her downcast face, when suddenly those beautiful eyes were raised, and their glance kindled as she haughtily demanded her release.

The name of Alice was spoken very gently, no other sound was linked with it, and yet how much was expressed in the simple utterance of that name, and the intonation of Walter's voice.

Once more the bird was free to roam, but she remained motionless, as if bondage were not so irksome, nor freedom so joyous as anticipated. Walter had vanished, and Alice now passed on towards the room of her invalid friend.

Patient and uncomplaining, lay a gentle girl upon her pillow, while the mirthful voices of her young companions rose from the garden beneath. Alice stooped to kiss that pallid cheek, and as she bound those throbbing temples, there were grateful thanks and whispered entreaties that she should not remain longer by her side, but still Alice tarried until that aching head was soothed and lulled to rest, when she wandered to the library in search of a book. It was an unusual hour for the Major to be at home, and Alice was surprised to find him still seated in his study, so preoccupied in mind, that he did not notice her entrance; she stole behind his chair, and parting the gray hair from his forehead, softly kissed it. He looked up smiling, and exclaimed, "Ah! you little witch, I was just thinking of you. How many hearts have you stolen? There has been a young knight with me craving a boon I am loath to grant, and yet it is very selfish to wish to keep you all to myself; but what shall we do without you? How dull the old house will seem, when you have taken wing with your gay wooer, far over the sea."

The Major was arrested by Alice's wondering eyes and her changing cheek, as she replied, "Dear papa, I will never leave you."

"Nay, my pretty one," returned the Major, "he loves you well, and deserves this sacrifice. I know of no one to whom I would sooner resign you."

Alice crept closer to him, and whispered, "Father, did you tell Walter this?"

If a pistol had suddenly exploded near him, the good Major could not have been more startled, as he rose hurriedly, declaring that the child was mad. Who ever dreamt of Walter, or of consulting him in the matter! No, a more exalted position awaited his daughter. As the wife of Reginald Langdon, both rank and fortune would surround her.

But Alice did not seem elated by so bright a destiny; the volume, behind which her face had been screened, was thrown upon the table, as she turned towards him, saying, "Father I cannot accept Mr. Langdon's offer, I do not love him."

"Tush, child," ejaculated the old gentleman, "you will learn to love him."

That little trembling hand rested upon his, and those pleading eyes were raised, as she murmured, "Would you send your little Alice from you? It would break my heart to go; did you not say you were unwilling to give me away?"

Her gentle earnestness brought tears into his eyes, and, folding her in his arms, he whispered, "Well, darling, you shall have your own way, but think seriously of it; such an offer is not to be met with every day, and upon my soul, child, I do not see what more you could require in a husband. But you shall decide for yourself; your mother might have managed this business better, but I never could refuse you anything."

Then ringing for a servant, he ordered his horse, and soon after left the room. He had scarcely gone, when Alice

regretted that she had not asked him to speak to Mr. Langdon, and announce her decision at once. Quick as thought, she flew to the portico, but the Major was already mounted upon his sturdy nag. Alice called out, "Stop! Papa, I have something to tell you."

"Yes, yes, I know all about it," added her Father. "Woman-like, you have already changed your mind." So saying, he gave old Dumpling a touch with his whip, looked back as if enjoying poor Alice's demure face, whilst she stood mournfully shaking her pretty head at him, and then he cantered off at a brisk pace.

When the party were assembled at dinner, Alice evidently avoided meeting Langdon's eye, and during the afternoon contrived never to be left alone with him. She hoped that her father would himself settle the matter as kindly and delicately as possible, and spare her the pain of an interview with Mr. Langdon. But Mrs. Vere disapproved of any further interference; she thought it a mere whim of the child's, and still counted much upon the success of the suit when pleaded by the eloquent lips of so handsome a man as Langdon.

If Mrs. Vere had a fault (and who has not their own little private catalogue stowed away in some long forgotten corner?) it was one she least imagined herself guilty of, a most un-republican pride of birth; and that aspiring nature, which in a man would have soared to the high places of the earth, pent

up in the more circumscribed sphere of woman's life, only flashed out in occasional sparks, showing where the flint struck fire, but never kindling into blaze.

CHAPTER XX.

It was the first of May, blooming, lovely May, bride of the summer, wreathed in flowery garlands, with the tears of April still upon her cheek.

I hail thee, sweet May, perhaps more fondly because I feel it may be the last time I shall look upon thy face; when spring again returns, thy soft dew may fall upon the old man's grave.

Age has little left but regrets; the world has lost its charm to those who, standing upon a mere atom of earth, find it fast crumbling beneath their feet. But, ye light-hearted children, hopeful, smiling youth, it is meet that you should greet life with buoyant heart and unfaltering step, for to you there is no future and no past; your sun is ever at meridian, casting no shadow upon the glowing present.

And to Reginald Langdon how enchanting seemed that present, lighted by the smile of Alice Vere, for he was of too sunny a temperament to dream of doubt or uncertainty.

It was on just such a morning as we would choose for a ramble in those silent, solemn forests, which at the South extend for miles around most of the dwellings of its secluded

but hospitable gentry, that the party at The Oaks strolled through the gate, and then scattered into separate groups, when Alice found herself suddenly deserted by all her gentle mates, alone with one whose fascinations were certainly dangerous. Ensnared like a frightened dove, there was no escape for her now.

The woods were redolent with perfume, and the brook rippled softly at her feet, but lower and more musical than the stream, was the pleading voice of love. Poor bird! how she trembled, and yet this must not be; captivity without love to gild it, would be worse than death.

The drooping head was raised, and then came that answering word; low and mournfully it sounded in his ear, a plaining note, the death knell of his cherished hopes, and she who had caused this sorrow seemed alike stricken with pain. Her gentle, pitying nature was half tempted now to yield, when whispering like the breeze came the memory of a love to which alone her heart responded.

* * * * *

There were bright eyes and eager faces peering through the half closed venetians, as Alice and Langdon walked slowly towards the house. "Look!" whispered a laughing Hebe, "there they are at last. Mercy! What a stupid thing this love must be! Not a single word do they seem to be saying—regularly talked out. May the fates deliver me from anything so melancholy!"

This fervent ejaculation was followed by a peal so joyous

that it could have come from no heart less innocent than May Burnard's.

So thought Arthur Vere, as he looked into that blooming face; her playful mirth drew him from sad thoughts, thoughts of one who had passed from earth to that Spirit Land, where his heart had followed.

A few months since he had received a little package sealed with black. None knew its contents save himself, for the name of Constance was written upon the page within.

Alice did not appear at dinner, and when she joined the circle in the evening, she was spared any embarrassing curiosity by Arthur, who immediately came to her relief, and so adroitly did he manage to distract general attention from his sister's pale face that even May Burnard's mischievous intentions were foiled.

Tea had been already handed, and there was a snug little whist table, at which Mrs. Vere presided, but the lady's usual luck had deserted her, and she soon resigned her seat to the Major, consoling herself with overlooking his hand, whilst her ample fan tapped him suggestively on the shoulder, or waved triumphantly over his success.

Alice had deserted the gay circle within for a walk upon the terrace. She did not tremble when Langdon approached her now, nor shun him as before; her face was very pale, and as the moonlight fell upon the snowy dress, draped around those fair proportions, she looked like the beautiful

Galatea of the Sculptor God, cold and motionless as marble, until Langdon spoke of parting, when a sigh stole from those silent lips, and tears glittered beneath the drooping lids, as he exclaimed, "Alice, you have made even pity, which I despise from others, sweet, and yet I dare not tarry longer here, for how can I see you and not rebel against my fate! Why should I linger, since the love which I had so fondly hoped would have surrounded you with happiness, has brought you only sorrow and regret?"

"Mr. Langdon," murmured Alice, "were I insensible to such merit as yours, what has passed between us would cause me less pain; you deserve more than I have to give, a heart that has reflected no other image than your own."

Langdon raised her hand tenderly to his lips, and then, for the first time, suspected that the love he had coveted was another's.

CHAPTER XXI.

It was Sunday, and the coach was at the door punctually to convey the ladies to the parish church, distant some five miles from The Oaks.

Breakfast had been despatched an hour earlier than usual, and the cavalcade of saddle horses and vehicles formed quite an imposing array, as they drew up in regular order; Uncle Ned presiding over the ceremonies with due solemnity, seated upon his high box, and looking down contemptuously upon every other turn-out but his own. Alice's spirited little steed stood impatiently pawing the ground, when Arthur led him to the steps, and assisted his sister as she sprang lightly into her seat.

The forces were now mustered, Luna in a spotless kerchief was installed behind her mistress's carriage, when the whole party swept gaily down the avenue.

Walter formed one of the cortége surrounding Alice, as she dashed on ahead, defying all Uncle Ned's rules of propriety; although the old man, who in former years had followed his master's fortunes in camp and field, gave her the usual military salute, lifting the back of his hand respectfully to his antiquated beaver.

The road was unusually smooth, and the distance was shortened by the elastic spirits of the young people, as they drove rapidly along. But the sight of the church, surrounded by its wide-spreading trees, seemed to silence their hilarity, and the ladies settled their bonnets and smoothed their ruffled plumes, before entering the humble chapel, whilst the gentlemen stood grouped without, talking in a subdued voice, and exchanging greetings with their country neighbors.

It was a solemn old church that, of rude exterior, erected before the Revolution, by the English ; the roof was covered with lichens and moss, and the rough brick walls were dark with age. Within was uncarved, unvarnished wood-work, a plain reading-desk and pulpit, and high-backed pews, where one might kneel in privacy, Mrs. Vere's elevated black bonnet being just visible, as she sat in her own especial corner.

And now the congregation from far and near were assembled, the clergyman opened his book, and read, "The Lord is in his holy Temple, let all the earth keep silence before him."

How impressive seemed this sublime announcement, uttered amidst the silent woods in that simple, rustic church !

The time-worn Bible, from which the lessons of the day were read, was associated with the revolutionary struggles of the early colonists. It had been taken from the altar, where it now rested, by some British soldiers, during the war, and carried to England, where many years afterwards it was accidentally recovered, purchased at a book-stall in

the streets of London by an American, and restored to the spot to which it so sacredly belonged.

The simple hymn which now ascended in that Christian temple was sung by no orchestral choir—there were no operatic selections, no artistical efforts, but the familiar strain was caught up heartily by all the congregation, and it sounded like the voice of humble praise, not of triumph or display.

The minister of this little parish was much beloved, and many were the kindnesses rendered to the good man and his family. His old-fashioned and peculiar enunciation might sometimes provoke a smile among the younger and less serious of his listeners, but even their attention was arrested by the earnest faith and exalted piety which marked his discourse.

I have heard the beautiful ritual of the Episcopal Church read in the fashionable Gothic structures of the present day, by priests in snowy robes, from richly gilded books that rested upon crimson cushions, whilst the light streamed through gorgeously-stained windows upon the marble font and tessellated pavement of the chancel, and it seemed to me that I had been admitted into some Eastern fane, a place of luxury and repose, but not the worshipping place of the Christian's God.

And yet, are not such the crowded assemblies to which you hasten, my gentle reader, on the Lord's day? In the comfortable, cushioned seat where you lounge away a few un-

appropriated hours, turning over the leaves of your elegantly-bound manual, and eyeing askance your neighbor's last new bonnet or gay dress, are you offering the incense of praise and thanksgiving to your Maker?

In that brilliant parterre of waving plumes and flowers, of cashmeres and satins, velvets and ermine, there are faces lovelier than all the wealth of the Indies, and eyes brighter than the diamonds of Golconda. But it is not here that we would view these charms. Oh! flowers of immortal birth, come with veiled faces and in meek attire to kneel at the altar of your God! Let fashion and the world surround you elsewhere, if you will, but not in the sanctuary of the Most High, lest ye profane the temple of the Lord.

The little congregation were now dispersing, after some very innocent gossip, to their distant homes. Mrs. Vere had a certain well-laden basket secretly consigned to the Pastor's chaise, as the Major and herself lingered in conversation with the excellent man. Alice and her companions entered the little churchyard. No costly monuments or polished shafts marked the resting-places of its dead; the graves were overgrown with weeds; a few wild flowers smiled faintly among them, and dark cedars threw their sombre shadow upon the slanting stones.

In this silent cemetery there was nothing to deceive the living. Death seemed here what it really is, solemn and mysterious, not like life, bright with evanescent flowers—a garden or a showy pageant blazoned with the deeds of man.

* * * * *

Bounding lightly along the road with arching neck and flowing mane, sped the beautiful little animal upon which Alice was mounted.

Walter Gray, like a true knight, rode at her bridle rein, but Alice seemed never to have forgiven him that provoking smile, or her forcible detention some mornings since; and now that Langdon had gone, her manner was even more distant than before.

The rest of the party were still several miles from the avenue, when Walter stooped to unlatch the gate, and without dismounting, held it open for his fair companion to pass. She dashed hastily through, and in his eagerness to follow her, his spur accidentally touched his horse's flank, when the half-open gate swung forward and struck the horse so violently that the terrified animal plunged wildly, and Walter was thrown against a tree.

In an instant Alice was kneeling by his side, trembling and terror-stricken, for there was no sign of life in that pale, unconscious face. A sickening dread crept over her, as Walter's head rested heavily upon her arm, when a faint flush passed over his countenance, and the tearful eyes of Alice Vere were mirrored in his own. As he slowly revived she whispered,

"Walter, are you hurt? It was my foolish, impatient haste which caused this accident."

Never had waking moment seemed so blessed to Walter

Gray, and although too bewildered to comprehend her meaning at once, after a brief interval he replied—

“Nay, Alice, I have only my own carelessness to chide; and how can I regret a mischance which has purchased for me such happiness!”

That trembling arm was gently withdrawn, and as the carriages now approached, Gray made an effort to rise, but his injury was more serious than he imagined; he felt dizzy and faint, and while anxious faces and kindly aid surrounded him, sank back again, unconscious.

It was several days before Walter was pronounced convalescent, and Alice, who had flitted about his room, leaving cheering gifts of fruit or flowers, had vanished now that he no longer needed such gentle care; but in the shadowy depths of those beautiful eyes, as they had bent tearfully over him, he had read more than he dared trust himself to hope.

The party at The Oaks had subsided into the usual family circle, and Mrs. Vere's preparations were now made for the annual visit to their sea-shore residence, during the few months of summer, when the malaria from the rich alluvial lands made their stay on the plantation unsafe.

Alice seemed entirely engrossed in these domestic arrangements, and Walter, in despair of obtaining even a casual glimpse of her fair face, had retired to the study, to while away the long afternoon. He read until the deepening twilight, so suggestive of repose in its quiet gloom, crept into

the room, when the book was closed and he sank into the old leathern arm-chair, with its high back, and deep, yielding seat.

Now the spirit of slumber hovered over this especial chair most magically, and as a light, rustling sound, soft as the breath of the summer wind, stole into his dreamy ear, he fancied that a fair form stood near him, and so bright was the vision that he started into sudden consciousness, as a fluttering robe swept past; he grasped the delicate fabric, and his arm entwined the living embodiment of his dream.

A faint cry burst from the trembling captive, but whispered words soon soothed her fears to rest; she looked up confidently into Walter's face, and every doubt was merged in the blissful reality of a love which neither time nor trial had estranged.

CHAPTER XXII.

UPON a barren island washed by the waters of the Atlantic, where not a shrub or spear of grass was to be seen, and where only a few isolated palmettoes lifted their plumed heads above the rude, unpretending residences, stretching along the shore, was the summer home of Alice Vere.

There was a charm in this island life, in its freedom from the restraints of etiquette and fashion; the intercourse of the families assembled in these temporary abodes was marked by kindly hospitality and friendly feeling. You forgot the unpainted, rough exterior of the mansion, in the generous cheer and elegant courtesy that welcomed you within. Through those large uncarpeted rooms, and long piazzas, the sea breeze played healthfully, and the sound of the waves broke musically upon the ear.

During the heat of the day the ladies seldom ventured beyond their own veranda, but when the disk of the setting sun had disappeared below the horizon, doors were flung wide, and the whole population swarmed upon the beach. There were troops of merry urchins wading in the water, and tiny children paddling with their naked feet in pools left by

the receding waves ; whilst among the different equipages that rolled along the broad sandy shore, the old yellow coach shone out resplendently.

But, when the little ones were gathered home again, and the moon threw its silvery light over the placid sea, what a trysting spot for lovers was that silent, wavegirt strand !

And as Alice wandered with Walter upon the beach, the love so long and silently cherished not only shed its bright ray over the present, but the shadowy future seemed to them radiant with cloudless light.

Arthur Vere had been the confidant of their first whispered vows, and the sight of their happiness filled his heart with tranquil joy, during the short respite which he now allowed himself from the toils of business.

His favorite recreation was fishing. He seldom returned from the day's excursion until late in the evening, when his boat might be seen gliding into a quiet cove ; the little craft was then moored, and Arthur strolled homeward, followed by his faithful Primus, the humble companion of those frequent voyages.

These expeditions were the cause of some anxiety to Mrs. Vere, but Arthur evidently needed relaxation and amusement, and when she saw his pale face wearing a more healthful hue, and that bright smile beaming upon her, as in his boyish days, she chided her idle fears, and only welcomed him the more joyfully at evening.

It was one bright morning in August that the little

bark left its moorings, freighted with a larger party than usual.

Their hopes of success were amply fulfilled, many fish were caught during the day, and when the most choice had been selected for their repast, they made for land, running into a little bay, where a solitary palmetto offered them its scanty shade.

Here Primus exercised his culinary powers, and their dinner would have satisfied the most epicurean taste.

After the young fishermen had regaled themselves upon this dainty fare, preparations were made for a return home. The sky had become suddenly overcast, but the wind was in their favor, and there were no apprehensions of an approaching storm.

The boat bounded lightly over the sea, and Arthur was again at the helm, but, while his gay companions laughed and sang merrily around him, he remained silent and abstracted, until his attention was aroused by the ever watchful Primus, who pointed out the unmistakable signs of a squall. The necessary precautions were hardly taken when a vivid flash of lightning illumined the leaden sky, followed by a deafening peal; the ocean seemed roused from its lethargic slumber, as a sudden gust swept over its surface; the quivering vessel bent beneath the gale, and Arthur saw there was but one chance left, to double the cape, jutting out before them, in order to effect a landing on the other side, where they would find comparatively smooth water. He gave his

directions to Primus, and then added, cheerfully, "We are only a short distance from the shore, and even if the boat should be capsized in turning the point, we are all good swimmers, and must strike out boldly for the land."

Again the thunder pealed, whilst the whole sky blazed with electric fire; the little crew were hushed and awe-struck, as the heavens scowled wrathfully above them.

Arthur alone seemed tranquil and undismayed; there was a strange light upon his brow, and in his eye, that even in this hour of dread suspense, struck those who gazed upon him.

As they neared the coast their slight bark rode safely upon the crested waves, and there was a moment's lull in the storm; when just as they were rounding the Cape, the wind rose with redoubled fury, and a sudden flaw struck the boat, which was instantly capsized. As she filled, the whole party swam towards the shore.

They were within a few yards of it, when Primus, who made slower progress than the rest, called out piteously, "Oh! master, for God's sake, save me!"

Arthur instantly turned, while his companions gained the beach. The wind had now lashed the whole sea into sheets of foam, and, as he breasted a towering billow, his friends lost sight of him from the land. Almost blinded by the spray, they strained their eyes to obtain another glimpse of their companion, calling loudly upon his name; but there was no

answer or sound, save the booming waves along the coast, and the tempest raging fiercely around them.

With the first streaks of returning dawn, several figures might be seen wandering along the beach. The sea now lay calm and tranquil, as an infant lulled on its mother's breast, and there was a rosy blush over the waters, reflected like a smile upon its rest.

The persons who were grouped together upon the strand, paused as they reached the point where the boat had been upset the evening previous. And well might they pause, for upon those shelving sands, side by side, lay the master and the slave, with hand clasped in hand, as if even in death; they were still linked together by those kindly bonds of gratitude and affection that in life existed between them.

It is not here that I would touch upon a subject on which already too much has been said. I would merely assert the truth, when I add, that the life of the poor African was, in his master's eyes, of equal value with his own, and that for him this sacrifice was really made.

You will say it was only an act of common humanity, and so it was; but how few of our northern brethren who prate to us of the wrongs of slavery would have perilled thus much for the poor negro.

* * * * *

What a night was passed within the home which Arthur had left a few hours since, so full of peace and gladness.

There was no sleep for those anxious watchers, only prayer and earnest longings for the morn.

It came at last, and with it tidings that smote those fainting hearts even to the dust. We will not look upon that mother's agony, when the fearful truth was first revealed; such grief is too sacred for intrusion, but "in the midst of judgment, there is One who remembereth mercy." Her distracted prayer was answered, and she was again permitted to look upon the face of her beloved son, although the spirit dwelt no more on earth.

As Alice knelt by that brother's side, she heard not Walter's soothing words, for cold as those pale lips was the hand he clasped in his.

How beautiful in its deep repose was the face of Arthur Vere; upon the lofty brow and chiselled mouth was a radiant peace that seemed to tell how blest he was in his immortal home.

A bowed and stricken man stood near, gazing mournfully upon the dead.

That fair vine, in all its promise, was laid low, and the parent stem seemed crushed and broken by its fall.

Oh! ye who sorrow thus, bow humbly beneath "the chastening rod;" time will bind up your bleeding wounds, and the memory of that loved one will become a golden link to draw you heavenward, "for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

Introduction to Twilight.

THE shadow on the dial-plate has passed the hour of noon ; how we should weary of the dazzling glory of the mid-day sun, could we not turn to the softer shades of evening, for repose.

In the morning of life Time seems ever tardy, and we would gladly speed his flight to the goal of all our hopes ; thirsting for knowledge, for manhood, and for strength, we long for the meridian, and when it is reached, what years of unrest and toil are ours ! As we reap the ripened fruit of seed early sown, we are still looking for richer and more abundant harvest, forgetful that the evening draweth nigh, and ere half our golden dreams are realized, the day is spent, and in the misty Twilight we sit down to count our losses and our gains.



TWILIGHT.

At the commencement of the war of 1812 Jocelin Vere had been roused from the calm contentment of married life, by the stern call of duty.

In the glory of those exciting scenes his daring spirit found ample opportunities of distinction, and when peace was declared, in the spring of 1815, his name was honorably mentioned for promotion. * * * * *

The assurance of Jocelin's safety diffused light and hope once more within that saddened home at The Oaks, where Alice ministered dutifully to her parents, refusing to leave them in their sorrow and anxiety. Walter's frequent visits alone enlivened her seclusion, and the welcome Alice gave him, not only whispered patience, but inspired to renewed exertion. With steady purpose and unfaltering courage he toiled to redeem past misfortune, and to create a fitting home for so fair a bride. How few who thus nerve themselves to battle manfully with the difficulties of life, are ever overcome!

There is one whose humble fortunes were closely linked with Alice Vere's from early childhood, over whose bereavement I have passed with what may seem unfeeling silence. Had I possessed the dramatic skill of a writer whose recent popular work has presented to the public an exalted ideal of the negro race, a pathetic interest might have been thrown around the widowed Lisette ; but I would simply record the truth—that bereaved heart was soon solaced, and another was installed in the vacant place of Primus.

Nor can I believe in the delicate and refined sensibilities which Mrs. Stowe has attributed to this peculiarly marked people. This lady has done more for the cause of slavery than she imagined, when, in the character of Uncle Tom, she elevates the institution itself, for freedom could never have developed such perfection ; to spiritualize and ennoble the poor African, she has made use of the very system she so loudly denounces.

* * * * *

In Fourth street Jocelin's anticipated return illumined the old domicile with a flood of sunshine, as the little "Beam" flew from room to room, proclaiming the joyful news.

During her husband's absence a new and engrossing love had been vouchsafed to that trembling heart ; Marion was the mother of a blooming boy, who bore the name of Arthur.

As our naval hero entered, unannounced, the home where he had left a weeping, sorrowful wife, why did he pause

before ascending that familiar stairway, as if he scarcely dared trust himself to glance beyond it?

This was indeed the Jacob's ladder of his dream, revealing only angel figures to his longing sight—for there, where he had so often pictured her, stood his lovely wife with her cherub child.

It was no illusion, but a smiling reality, which Jocelin clasped fervently to his heart. There were no more yawning separations to divide them, the newly-gained commission was resigned, and when, a few days later, Edward Wallace joined the family group, Marion's happiness was complete.

The gallant conduct of the young Lieutenant was noted among many of those brilliant successes of American seamanship, that surprised not only the enemy, but even our own countrymen, most of whom little anticipated such results.

Jocelin's presence was eagerly coveted elsewhere, and towards the fall preparations were made for their journey South.

Nothing could persuade Aunt Miriam to migrate, and the house seemed sadly desolate when the little "Beam" and her baby were really gone. But Miss Menlove's active charities were soon warmly enlisted in her nephew's behalf; contrary to her usual instinct, she seemed bent upon some matrimonial scheme, involving the happiness of the brave Captain.

And when she intimated, in a business-like way, her benevolent designs, Wallace laughingly suggested advertising for

the article forthwith, and lighting his cigar in that sanctum of purity, a privilege never before granted to mortal man, strolled into the streets. On returning some hours later, as he approached their usual sitting-room, a strain of rare melody greeted him from within; the voice was not so bird-like or joyous as Marion's; in its deep tone was a power and feeling that seemed to come straight from the heart, and as the last sweet cadence vibrated upon the listener's ear, Wallace passed on towards his room, wondering who this syren could be, at the same time he firmly resolved to withstand any secret machinations of Aunt Miriam's.

After bestowing more than ordinary care upon the external man, he entered the parlor, where the fair vocalist now sat very demurely taking up the stitches in Miss Menlove's knitting. The Captain mentally ejaculated, "Some pensioner, perhaps, on my Aunt's bounty, and I am an asylum designed for the distressed damsel." This pleasant little surmise was hardly concluded, when he was formally presented; the lady bowed slightly as Wallace advanced, lifted her dark gray eyes for a moment to his face, and then rested them steadily upon the knitting. She was not critically beautiful, the whole expression of her countenance was concentrated in those speaking eyes. But there was some irresistible charm in the manner of Isabel Ayer, and a dignified repose that obtained for her universal respect, although she was only a teacher in the school established by her widowed mother, the lady whom we may remember

Miss Menlove having so kindly befriended some years since,

And did Wallace "refuse to hear the voice of the charmer" when she sang again that witching lay, could he be deaf to those entrancing sounds?

Nay, he listened until the songstress, like the gifted St. Cecilia, seemed enthroned far beyond his reach, surrounded by an atmosphere of poesy and music; too exalted in her celestial sphere to smile upon a rude son of the ocean.

But the moon shines as brightly on the rough sea as on the blooming earth, and this fair saint had a woman's tender, loving heart.

Not many months passed away when another gentle bride was welcomed in Fourth street, and, as Edward Wallace's wife, Isabel became the comfort of Miriam Menlove's declining years.

Jocelin and his little "Beam" were comfortably established at The Oaks, and the light of Marion's happy temper reflected its sunshine into those darkened hearts, where the memory of Arthur was still so tearfully enshrined.

* * * * *

No marriage bells pealed out merrily upon the bridal morn of Alice Vere, but the sweet note of the red bird sounded pleasantly through the silent woods, and the golden jessamine hung its fragrant garlands upon the road-side, as the wedding party left the little church, where the vows of Walter and Alice had been solemnly consecrated.

Among the guests who had been present at the ceremony, was one whom Alice would fain have greeted kindly, but she disappeared mysteriously, and had evidently wished to avoid notice, as she remained apart, during the service, with her veil closely drawn.

Had it been lifted, reader, you could scarcely have recognised, in that altered, faded countenance, the once brilliant Lucy Wilson.

The world no longer offered any attractions to her, for the serious imputations cast upon her character, afforded by past levity of conduct, and the association of her name with Howard's sad fate, had made an unpleasant impression even upon those most disposed to charitable feeling.

In her splendid home sat an imbecile husband, and woman's tender, yearning sympathies lay smouldering, like the fire upon her voiceless hearthstone, whilst for that proud heart there was only left the ashes of bitter disappointment and regret.

In the simple cottage of which Alice was so long the happy inmate, many peaceful years were passed. Time seemed only to visit her with its brightest benediction; whilst children clustered around the cheerful fireside, and the sound of glad contentment rose within.

When political life gave a wider scope to Walter's talents, he rose rapidly in public estimation, and in the Senate of the United States his voice was often raised in eloquent debate, while he preserved the unblemished honor

and integrity of mind which won for him even higher consideration.

But the brightest jewel in fortune's diadem, was the affection of his inestimable wife, the gentle, truthful Alice Vere.

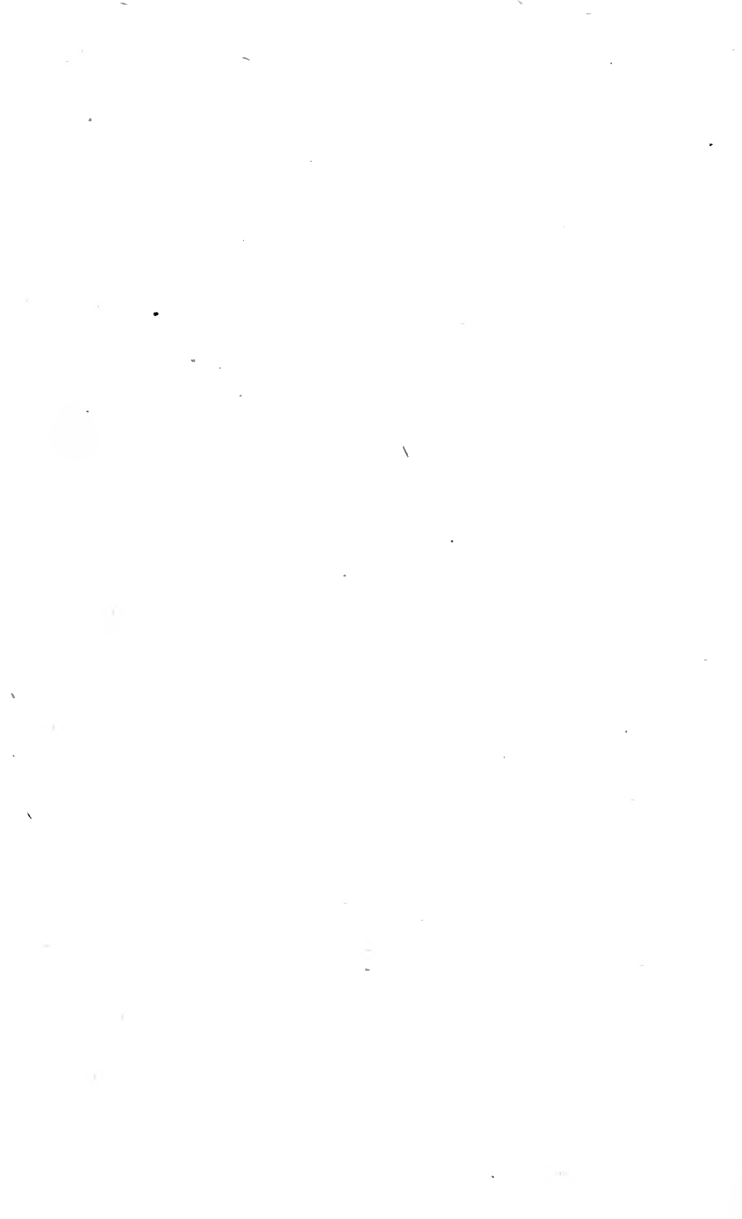
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IN the garden of my life fair flowers have faded, opening buds and expanded blossoms alike have perished, from all but memory, whence I have gathered these few fragments, around which a living fragrance seemed to float as I wove the humble chaplet.

Reverently I have placed it upon the tomb of one whose name will flourish long after my frail garland is withered; for such transient flowers I may not ask a brighter destiny; and, reader, if there are feelings, less perishable, in an old man's experience, that have been veiled in silence, they are slumbering Echoes which he dare not wake.

THE END.





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